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Russia's and United States' evolving policies towards the Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Arms Control Regime: the Role Theory perspective

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Statement of integrity

I hereby declare having conducted this academic work with integrity. I confirm that I have not used plagiarism or any form of undue use of information or falsification of results along the process leading to its elaboration.

I further declare that I have fully acknowledged the Code of Ethical Conduct of the University of Minho.

Abstract

This dissertation aims at analysing the policies of Russia and the US, as two key nuclear actors, towards the international Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Arms Control regime [epitomized by the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)]. For that, this dissertation created a specific research question, "How have the role dynamics underpinning Russia's and US' standing as nuclear powers been informing their policies towards Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Arms Control Regime?", to focus one's attention on the dynamics of roles and the nuclear debate. The dissertation draws upon Role Theory, a constructivist theoretical perspective that analyses how the actor, its social environment and the audience at whom the performance is directed can influence and shape the construction of a role. The dissertation develops two specific roles that serve to organize the empirical analysis: Responsible Nuclear Power (RNP) and Nuclear Super Power (NSP). The nuclear policies of Russia and the US are analyzed by drawing on thematic analysis. The latter allows for the identification of specific patterns within the selected data (2015-2020) allowing for the categorization of elements that constitute the respective roles. The analysis demonstrates the dynamics of role performance underpinning Russia's and US' nuclear foreign policies, something that creates tangible, deep-seated implications for the nuclear non-proliferation regime and arms control.

Key words: NPT, Russia, USA, Role Theory, Nuclear modernization

Resumo Analítico

Esta dissertação tem como objetivo analisar as políticas da Rússia e dos EUA, como dois atores nucleares fundamentais, em relação ao regime internacional de não proliferação nuclear e controle de armas [sintetizado pelo Tratado de Não Proliferação de Armas Nucleares (TNP)]. Para tal, esta dissertação criou uma questão de pesquisa específica, "Como as dinâmicas de representação inerentes à posição da Rússia e EUA enquanto potências nucleares têm vindo a informar as suas políticas em relação ao Regime de Não Proliferação Nuclear e Controle de Armas?", focando a atenção na dinâmica de papéis e no debate nuclear. A dissertação baseia-se na Teoria das Representações, uma perspectiva teórica construtivista que analisa como o ator, seu ambiente social e o público ao qual a performance é dirigida podem influenciar e moldar a construção de um papel. A dissertação desenvolve dois papéis específicos que servem para organizar a análise empírica: Responsible Nuclear Power (RNP) e Nuclear Super Power (NSP). As políticas nucleares da Rússia e dos EUA são analisadas com base na aplicação de análise temática. Este processo permite a identificação de padrões específicos dentro dos dados selecionados, durante o periodo de 2015-2020, permitindo a categorização dos elementos que constituem os respetivos papéis. A análise demonstra a dinâmica do desempenho do papel que sustenta as políticas nucleares da Rússia e dos EUA, algo que cria implicações tangíveis e profundas para o regime de não proliferação nuclear e controle de armas.

Palavras-chave: NPT, Russia, EUA, Teoria das Representações, Modernização nuclear

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Abbreviations

ABM	Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty
CSA	Comprehensive Safeguards Agreements
FPA	Foreign Policy Analysis
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
INF	Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty
IR	International Relations
JCPOA	Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action
MAD	Mutual Assured Destruction
MIRV	Multiple Independently Targetable Reentry Vehicle
MSC	Munich Security Conference
NNWS	Non-Nuclear Weapon States
New START	Treaty between the United States of America and Russian Federation on Measures for the Future Reductions and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty)
NPR	Nuclear Policy Review
NPT	Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
NSP	Nuclear Super Power
NSS	National Security Strategy
NWFZ	Nuclear Weapon Free Zone
NWS	Nuclear Weapon States
PNI	Presidential Nuclear Initiatives
PRC	People's Republic of China
PTBT	Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapon Tests in the Atmosphere, in Outer Space and Underwater
RNP	Responsible Nuclear Power

TNW	Tactical Nuclear Weapon
TPNW	Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons
TTBT	Threshold Test Ban Treaty
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNAC	United Nations Atomic Commission
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
US(A)	United States (of America)
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
VOA	Voluntary Offer Safeguard

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Introduction

a. Theme and Justification

Ever since the first moment when nuclear weapons were used in the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, in August 1945, a sense of urgency was instilled within the international community to address the new reality that emerged with the weaponization of nuclear technology. Aspirations to preempt the prospect of unchecked nuclear escalation resulted in a treaty that became the cornerstone of the contemporary nuclear regulatory regime: the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, better known as the NPT (Sauer and Reveraert 2018, 4).

The NPT is the basis of all international efforts aimed at eradicating nuclear weapons. It currently enjoys a nearly universal status, reflected in its exceptionally wide membership comprising 191 countries, something that makes it one of the most ratified treaties in human history (United Nations - Office for Disarmament Affairs, n.d.). However, this treaty is not a disarmament treaty by design; it possesses specific pillars that address different issues, one of them being the topic of disarmament. Notwithstanding, throughout the years of existence of the NPT, some of its members (namely Sweden, Brazil, Mexico, India) have advocated and endorsed attempts to implement fully the concept of complete disarmament, by all members of the international community. Such efforts were never accepted by the recognized nuclear entities, therefore, the NPT has, so far, never been made into a disarmament treaty (Kutchesfahani, "The NPT at 50: A Staple of Global Nuclear Order").

Outside the ranks of NPT members remain four states, namely India, Israel, Pakistan and North Korea[1] (Bergner 2012). These countries are, in practical terms, nuclear weapon holders, even though not recognized as such by the Treaty. The article IX of the NPT stipulates that a nuclear weapon state is only recognized as such if a state has successfully detonated a nuclear device prior to 1 January 1967 ("Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons" 1968, 169-175). Among this latter group of recognized nuclear states are the United States of America (USA) and the Russian Federation both chosen for the analysis in the present dissertation. Along with three other countries (France, the United Kingdom and the People's Republic of China), they compose the nuclear club within the NPT, corresponding to the Nuclear Weapon States (NWSs).

The remaining members of the Treaty (186) are the so-called Non-Nuclear Weapon States (NNWSs). The relationship between both groups of states is based on a certain bargaining logic (Miller

[1] South Sudan is another country that also does not belong to the NPT regime. However, unlike the others listed above, it does not possess nuclear infrastructure, therefore no nuclear weaponry. In addition to this information, the current developments surrounding Iran's nuclear program are also an element of stress for the NPT since this state has threatened to exit the NPT regime if the JCPOA status is not reverted to conditions prior to the withdrawal by the US, in 2018 (Norman and Meichtry, "Iran Threatens to Pull Out of Nuclear Treaty, Like North Korea").

2012, 6), underpinned by a mutual pledge by both parties: while the NWSs avoid transferring or sharing nuclear technology for military purposes, the NNWSs abstain from acquiring those nuclear capabilities ("Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons" 1968, 169-175).

An important element that defines the organization and the nature of the NPT are its constitutive pillars, something that corresponds to the NPT's core principles and therefore defines its *raison d'être*. Those three pillars are, respectively: the Non-Proliferation (of nuclear weapons) - art. I, II, III - , the Disarmament - art. VI - and the Peaceful Uses (of nuclear energy) - art. IV, V. ("Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons" 1968; Miller 2012, 5).

While the original rationale of the NPT pillars is the one of dynamic interaction and mutual support of each of the individual pillars' objectives, in reality, the relationship between these pillars is characterized by confrontation, tension and even conflict, since the members of the NPT, - the NWSs and the NNWSs - differ in their approaches to the importance of individual pillars. For the NWSs, the Non-Proliferation pillar corresponds to the central pillar of the NPT, something that is in line with the NWSs priority attributed to the issue of precluding further states from acquiring nuclear capabilities. The NNWSs, in their turn, are advocates of the centrality of the Disarmament pillar, under the rationale that the countries with nuclear arsenals should abide by the wording of Article VI and thus implement reduction of nuclear weapons, eventually leading to the latter's eradication (Rublee and Cohen 2018, 324-327).

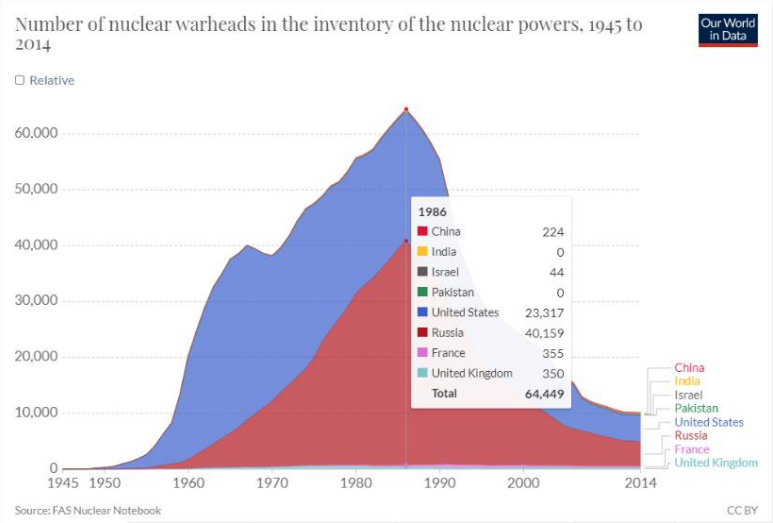
This aforementioned clash between the two positions has undermined the integrity and cohesion of the NPT membership. As long as the level of commitment of the NWSs is perceived to be lower than the one of the NNWSs, the latter group would always contest the rhetorical emphasis on compliance defended by the NWSs (Rublee and Cohen 2018, 327).

And as long as distinct perceptions concerning the issue of non-proliferation and disarmament exist, the respective debate and tensions between NWSs and NNWSs will continue to hamper the NPT's efficacy.

Against the backdrop of this brief overview of the origins, goals and membership of the NPT, we can now introduce two actors that are at the center of the present investigation: Russia and the US. Both are currently the holders of the biggest nuclear weapon stockpiles and possess the highest number of active nuclear weapons in history. Their arsenal is to a large extent a legacy of the Cold War, which was distinctively notorious for the arm race, including in the nuclear realm. As of 2020, the number of nuclear weapons of the two countries (both in the active and in the reserve status) amounts to a scaringly high number of 12170 nuclear warheads (Kristensen and Korda 2020a, 102; Kristensen

and Korda 2020b, 46) (Figure 1). Although this number does not come close to the 64449 nuclear warheads existing at the peak of the nuclear arms race in the mid-1980s (Scientists n.d.), the current number of accumulated nuclear warheads remains too high. This is in spite of the undeniable contribution of both countries to the major goal of NPT, namely eradication of nuclear weapons.

Figure 1 - Number of nuclear warheads in the inventory of the nuclear powers, 1945 to 2014



Source: FAS Nuclear Notebook (2020)[2]

That being said, more recent measures taken by both the US and Russia in the nuclear realm have been worrisome, to say the least. Two examples below help to elucidate this point. One of them is the ongoing decay of what once was a jewel in the crown of international diplomacy, cooperation and non-proliferation efforts, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or as it is better known, the JCPOA. Established in 2015, it represented a critically important international breakthrough, for both the US and its position in the Middle East (Fitzpatrick 2017, 23) and the NPT: by curbing the nuclear aspirations of Iran, the US acted towards fostering both the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament pillars enshrined in the Treaty. In 2018, however, the US, while acting unilaterally, and through presidential executive power, withdrew from the JCPOA. Such political gambit could not but create immediate negative repercussions for the international nuclear regulation efforts. Eventually, it meant that a single political decision of one of the key NPT players could (and did) undermine the future perspectives of talks on Iran's nuclear capability, thus obliterating all progress achieved over the period of three years (Fitzpatrick 2017, 27).

[2] Original source: FAS Nuclear Notebook, "Stockpiles of nuclear weapons." Accessed February 18, 2021. https://ourworldindata.org/nuclear-weapons.

The other case in point is the collapse of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF), an agreement dating back to 1987 and concluded as a product of the two superpowers' cooperation. This is one of the key treaties in force that directly contributed to the attenuation of tensions, de-escalation of armament stockpiling and effective elimination of an entire class of nuclear weapons and associated systems (Tobey, Zolotarev, and Kuhn 2019).

The INF expired on 2nd August, 2019, much owing to the inability of the parties involved to achieve a compromise in their positions and find appropriate channels for dialogue and cooperation (Pompeo 2019). Although the actions leading to the end of the NPT are attributed to the US, Russia is equally to blame for the demise of this more than 30-year old treaty: even though the Russian party kept insisting that it never violated the conditions of the treaty, the proof of the violations kept piling on (Tobey, Zolotarev, and Kuhn 2019).

These two examples showcase the mentioned moment of tension currently experienced by the nuclear nonproliferation regime, as well as demonstrate that the future of this regime and core treaty is bleak. This is an especially surprising and worrisome development if one considers the importance of nuclear weapons in international politics, their unprecedented destructive power and the associated humanitarian cost (Doyle 2019, 86), in addition to the everlasting radiological, economic and environmental consequences of nuclear weapons.

Ever since their first application in real warfare scenarios, these weapons changed the relational dynamics of international agents and re-shaped the foundations for the current international system, challenging the previously existing views on power, status and influence (Harrington de Santana 2009; Tannenwald, 2018).

Against this background, and especially in connection with the ongoing weakening of the NPT regime, it seems crucially important to reinvigorate the debate about nuclear weapons. This has happened to some extent already, as reflected in the public and academic discussion of the nuclear policy, technical procedure and the normative debate surrounding nuclear weapons possession (Sauer and Reveraert 2018, 1).

Moreover, the issue of the use of nuclear weapons and the associated humanitarian cost came to the centre of attention of the international community through the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons - TPNW) (Rublee and Cohen 2018, 333-334; Doyle 2019, 86-87). Nevertheless, in general, the lack of academic interest to the NPT is surprising, in spite of the decay of the several critically important treaties and agreements, as well as several instances of either violation, unresolved or total abandonment of one's obligations to international nuclear and arms control agreements. Given

that a misuse, an accidental or miscalculated implementation of a nuclear weapon can lead to severe consequences, and in its extreme, to a nuclear holocaust, it is necessary to revive the debate on the NPT, instead of relegating it to a backseat as a result of the competition for academic attention produced by a multitude of other global issues, such as climate change, deforestation, economic crises, or COVID-19.

b. Research Question

The Research Question guiding the present analysis conveys a connection between the theoretical framework adopted in the current investigation and the aspiration to analyse the policies of the two selected states, and is formulated as follows: **"How have the role dynamics underpinning Russia's and US' standing as nuclear powers been informing their policies towards Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Arms Control Regime?"**

Given the fact that the Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Arms Control regime is a particularly complex topic, it needs to be presented and defined for the purposes of the present analysis. The contemporary international Non-Proliferation regime entails multiple constitutive elements that allow the international community to address some of the direst problems in nuclear, biological, chemical and technological realms. A high risk stemming from the possible weaponization of all these areas propels the need for specific regulation. Respective issue-specific mechanisms and agreements include the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA); Nuclear Supplier Control Mechanisms (Nuclear Suppliers Group and NPT Exporters Committee); Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones (NWFZs); both Chemical and Biological Weapons Nonproliferation Regimes and the Missile Technology Control Regime. The other element that constitutes the non-proliferation regime is the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), this element being the cornerstone of international efforts for nuclear regulation and ultimate eradication of nuclear weapons.

In this dissertation, the focus will be mostly on the latter. However, this element (NPT) is complemented with the analysis of some arms control agreements: *Treaty between the United States of America and Russian Federation on Measures for the Future Reductions and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms,* also designated as New START Treaty (Woolf 2014, 1) and the *Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces Treaty*, commonly referred as INF Treaty, that have been particularly important in the recent arms control efforts (Taheran and Reif 2019, 26). Furthermore, we focus on the JCPOA, due to

outstanding importance to both non-proliferation and arms control efforts, in addition to its multilateral nature.

In terms of the time frame, the present investigation is twofold. Firstly, a broader time frame was established for the purpose of analyzing the nuclear foreign policies of both Russia and the US, covering a period extending over 30 years (1990-2020), towards the Treaty and the associated Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Arms Control regime. Secondly, the thesis focuses on the time period between 2015 and 2020, where analysis of US' and Russia's positioning towards the Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Arms Control regime by drawing on a systematic analysis of both states' policies and associated discourses.

It is important to note that what we refer to the 'nuclear policies' of Russia and the US' (a term that we use interchangeably with the 'policies of Russia and the US towards the Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Arms Control Regime'), includes the dimension of modernization of nuclear weapons and the respective programs and associated decisions.

Figure 2 presents the most recent tendencies of modernization enacted by Russia regarding its nuclear triad, a process that was initiated more than a decade ago (Bowen 2020; Podvig 2018; Woolf 2020).

Figure 2 - Russia's nuclear arsenal as of 2020

Type/name	Russian designation	Launchers	Year deployed	Warheads x yield (kilotons)	Total warheads
Strategic offensive weapons					
ICBMs					
SS-18 M6 Satan	RS-20V	46	1988	10 x 500/800 (MIRV)	460[a]
SS-19 M3 Stiletto	RS-18 (UR-100NUTTH)	0	1980	6 x 400 (MIRV)	0[b]
SS-19 M4	? (Avangard)	2	2019	1 x HGV	2
SS-25 Sickle	RS-12M (Topol)	36	1988	1 x 800	36
SS-27 Mod 1 (mobile)	RS-12M1 (Topol-M)	18	2006	1 x 800?	18
SS-27 Mod 1 (silo)	RS-12M2 (Topol-M)	60	1997	1 x 800	60
SS-27 Mod 2 (mobile)	RS-24 (Yars)	126	2010	4 x 100? (MIRV)	504[c]
SS-27 Mod 2 (silo)	RS-24 (Yars)	14	2014	4 x 100? (MIRV)	56
SS-X-28 (mobile)	RS-26 (Yars-M)	-	-	4 x 100? (MIRV)	-
SS-X-29 (silo)	RS-28 (Sarmat)	-	(2020)	10 x 500? (MIRV)	-
Subtotal			**302**		**1136[d]**
SLBMs					
SS-N-18 M1 Stingray	RSM-50	1/16	1978	3 x 50 (MIRV)	48[e]
SS-N-23 M1	RSM-54 (Sineva)	6/96	2007	4 x 100 (MIRV)[f]	384[g]
SS-N-32	RSM-56 (Bulava)	3/48	2014	6 x 100 (MIRV)	288[h]
Subtotal			**10/160[i]**		**720[j]**
Bombers/weapons					
Bear-H	Tu-95 MS	21/30	1984	6-16 x AS-15A ALCMs	196
Bear-H Mod	Tu-95 MSM	18/20	2015	14 x AS-23B ALCMs	252
Blackjack	Tu-160	11/13	1987	12 x AS-15B ALCMs, or AS-23B, bombs	132
Subtotal		**50/68[k]**			**580[l]**
Subtotal strategic offensive forces		**530[m]**			**~2,436[n]**
Nonstrategic and defensive weapons					
ABM/Air/Coastal defense					
SA-20/SA-21	S-300/S-400	~1000	1992/2007	1 x low	~290
Gazelle	53T6	68	1986	1 x 10	68[o]
SSC-1B Sepal	Redut	8[p]	1973	1 x 350	4
SSC-5 Stooge (SS-N-26)	K-300P/3M-55	48	2015	(1 x 10)[q]	20
Land-based air					
Bombers/fighters (Tu-22M3/Su-24M/Su-34/MiG-31K)		~300	1974/2006/1983	ASMs, bombs	~500
Ground-based					
SS-21 Scarab SSM	9K79, Tochka	-	1981	1 x 10-100	-
SS-26 Stone SSM	9K720, Iskander-M	132	2005	1 x 10-100	70
SSC-7 GLCM[r]	9M728				
SSC-8 GLCM[s]	9M729	20[t]	2017	1 x 10-100	20
Naval					
Submarines/surface ships/air (LACM, SLCM, ASW, SAM, DB, torpedoes)					~900
Subtotal nonstrategic and defensive forces					**~1,870[u]**
TOTAL STOCKPILE					**~4,310[v]**
Deployed					1,572
Reserve					2,740
Retired warheads awaiting dismantlement					**2,060**
Total inventory					**6,370**

Source: Kristensen, Hans M. and Korda, Matt. 2020a[3]

Figure 3 represents the current modernization scenario of the US and following modernization efforts for the upcoming decade.

[3] Kristensen, Hans M. and, Korda, Matt. 2020a. "Russian nuclear forces, 2020." Bulletin of Atomic Scientists 76(2): March: 103-104. https://doi.org/10.1080/00963402.2020.1728985.

Figure 3 - US' nuclear arsenal as of 2020

Type/Designation	No.	Year deployed	Warheads x yield (kilotons)	Warheads (total available)[a]
ICBMs				
LGM-30G Minuteman III				
Mk12A	200	1979	1-3 W78 x 335 (MIRV)	600[b]
Mk21/SERV	200	2006[c]	1 W87 x 300	200[d]
Total	**400**[e]			**800**[f]
SLBMs				
UGM-133A Trident II D5/LE	**240**[g]			
Mk4A		2008[h]	1-8 W76-1 x 90 (MIRV)	1,486[i]
Mk4A		2019	1-2 W76-2 x low (MIRV)[j]	50[k]
Mk5		1990	1-8 W88 x 455 (MIRV)	384
Total	**240**			**1,920**[l]
Bombers				
B-52H Stratofortress	87/44[m]	1961	ALCM/W80-1 x 5-150	528
B-2A Spirit	20/16	1994	B61-7 x 10-360/-11 x 400 B83-1 x low-1,200	322
Total	**107/60**[n]			**850**[o]
Total strategic forces				**3,570**
Nonstrategic forces				
F-15E, F-16 DCA	n/a	1979	1-5 B61-3/-4 bombs x 0.3–170[p]	230
Total				**230**[q]
Total stockpile				**3,800**
Deployed				1,750[r]
Reserve (hedge and spares)				2,050
Retired, awaiting dismantlement				**2,000**
Total Inventory				**5,800**

Source: Kristensen, Hans M. and Korda, Matt. 2020b[4]

The efforts listed above reflect the initiatives implemented by the Obama administration, which began during the 2010s and extended throughout both the Obama and Trump's administrations (Eaves 2021; Mckeon 2019; Reif 2018), with their further extension planned for the upcoming decades.

c. State of Art

The literature surrounding the NPT and associated international agreements is extremely rich and diversified. While representing an advantage to a scholar interested in investigating NPT, this diversity can also be vertiginous and thus hamper the objective of a focused, systematic research process. This risk can be mitigated by a careful analysis of the state of the art and a selection of individual literature streams that are deemed most relevant to the present research focus. In the investigation at hand, this portrayal of the state of the art allows to identify certain tendencies.

First, there is the first stream of literature corresponding to the NPT, its current status and range of action, normative value and validity in contemporary international context. Some of the contributions in this stream are of special importance to the present dissertation due to their consideration of individual actions of US, Russia or other states in the context of the (recent)

[4] Kristensen, Hans M. and, Korda, Matt. 2020b. "United States nuclear forces, 2020." Bulletin of Atomic Scientists 76(1): January: 47. https://doi.org/10.1080/00963402.2019.1701286.

predicaments that the NPT currently faces and the ongoing weakening of the NPT regime (Tobey, Zolotarev, and Kuhn 2019; Osiewicz 2018, 153).

The second stream of NPT literature that is worthy of mention is composed by contributions that observe the validity of the NPT through normative and humanitarian lenses, while advocating a deep structural change in the NPT so that the latter can adapt itself to new geopolitical circumstances surrounding the nuclear arsenals. For instance, James Doyle (2019) analyses the humanitarian cost of the use and maintenance of nuclear weapons, while Tom Sauer and Mathias Reveraert (2018) focus on the stigmatization of nuclear weapons. Maria Rost Rublee and Avner Cohen (2018), venture into the realm of norms applied to the nuclear field, in an attempt to alter the normative value that is currently attached to nuclear arsenals. Seminal to this normative debate are the contributions made towards the topic of nuclear taboo (Tannenwald 2018 89-90; Gibbons and Lieber 2019, 31-32).

Still within the NPT literature, one can find contributions of more technical nature (such as analysis of reports concerning the military expenditure on nuclear weapons, analysis of strategic national documents and their implications and minutes developed through collective action, in security fora) that are vital to any assessment of the range and efficacy of the NPT as a regulatory regime (Kristensen and Norris 2018a, 2018b; Kristensen and Korda 2019, Kristensen and Norris 2020a, 2020b).

Lastly, there is yet another segment of literature that delves into Russia's and the US' policies in the nuclear realm[5]. This type of literature assesses the rationale employed by either of the countries in question, as well as analyses the impacts of US' and Russia's (foreign) policies for the nuclear regulatory regime in broad terms. Cases in point are contributions on specific events and policy documents, including the analysis of Russia's Military Doctrine (Sinovets and Renz 2015, 1-2), as well as some of the more recent developments in Russia's nuclear strategy (Long 2018, 2-7) and deterrence (Cimbala and McDermott 2016, 549-552; Sokov 2020, 1-6).

In addition, the existing literature includes instances of contributions focusing on the impacts that modernization programs (Woolf 2019, 25-30) of individual countries have upon the accomplishment of the core pillars of the NPT. In the case of Russia, two of the examples of such contributions on Disarmament and Non-Proliferation are the one of Pavel Podvig (2018) as well as the one of Hans Kristensen and Robert S. Norris (2014).

[5] The present section does not include a review of the literature on the individual foreign policies of the US and Russia in more general terms. While not unimportant, this literature falls beyond the scope of the present thesis that places its emphasis on the policies towards the NPT and aims to ascertain the aforementioned connection between NPT and individual states' roles, rather than relating specific nuclear policies to the longstanding foreign policy traditions in either of the United States or Russia.

Concerning the US' position, the literature tends to focus on the shifts in US nuclear policy and the respective implications for the NPT. A number of contributions displays concern about the prospects of weakening of the nuclear regime as a whole, a tendency instigated by US withdrawal from treaties such as are examples the ABM Treaty, the INF Treaty or the JCPOA (Fitzpatrick 2017, 25; Rusten 2010, 10; Trenin 2019, 15), in combination with the changing importance of nuclear weapons for the (US) national security, exemplified in the latest US Nuclear Posture Review (Hersman 2018, 1-5; Miller 2018, 1-12).

However, theory-informed contributions on the NPT are rare, while as mentioned above, Russia's and US' nuclear policies tend to be analysed from the Strategic Studies' perspective (Jervis 1985; Fuhrmann 2015), often focused upon specific (historically contingent) threat conceptions in which nuclear weapons feature as a means of survival.

One of the rare exceptions to the lack of studies employing IR theories to the analysis of the individual states' policies towards the NPT is the contribution of Anne Harrington de Santana (2016). In her contribution, Harrington de Santana points out the symbiotic relation between the Realist perspective on power and nuclear weapons (by making reference to Waltz and his concept of nuclear weapons as the "ultimate source of national security" (Waltz *apud* Harrington de Santana 2016, 95). In her analysis, Harrington de Santana breaks down the possession and acquisition of nuclear weapons as a viable course of individual states' actions, while also demystifying the fetishism of nuclear weapons, by focusing on the case of the US (Harrington de Santana 2016, 95-97).

Another contribution of interest is of Carmen Wunderlich (2014; Müller & Wunderlich, 2018, 343-344), which establishes the connection between international norms and norm entrepreneurship of individual countries. This blend of concepts, by this author, in a first tier of analysis allows one to comprehend the working mechanics of a regime such as the NPT and the influence that norms - nuclear norms in this particular case - can have in altering the core functioning of said regime. This contribution also allows to witness the manifestation of specific states within the NPT regime, attempting to shift the role dynamics that guide the regime. It is here where the reference to another of Wunderlich's contribution comes into play, since it takes on the case of Iran and fuses the analysis of Iran's foreign policy with Iran's normative power towards the NPT regime, considering its particular international status (of a 'pariah' or 'rogue' state) (Wunderlich 2014; Muller & Wunderlich 2018, 357-360). The contribution of Wunderlich is representative of a recent tendency in which the analysis of individual policies through the role theory perspective is connected to the norm diffusion approach (Tannenwald 2018, 35; Rublee and Cohen 2018; Muller & Wunderlich 2018, 343-344), including the

exploration of the concepts of power, status and prestige (*cf* Malici & Walker 2016; Harnisch, Bersick & Gottwald 2017; Friedrichs 2020). This is the case of the analysis of China's national and foreign policy role conceptions, informed by the aspiration to understand political choices enacted by the Chinese elites (Shih 2012, 71-91), who are more and more inclined to invest into the development of nuclear capabilities as a means of boosting its international stance amidst the other nuclear powers (Haynes 2018, 1).

The present thesis positions itself at the intersection between the aforementioned literature streams, which are all subordinated to the overarching goal of the investigation, to establish a connection between the NPT and possible role (or sets of roles) that key members of the Treaty may perform. In this way, the present dissertation aims to fill this gap of the IR-informed analysis of individual countries' policies towards the NPT by adopting a particular theoretical framework of Role Theory. While it seems promising to analyse the policies of both Russia and the US towards the NPT, due to a potential to understand the dynamics of role enactment by the NPT members, the Role Theory has thus far not been chosen as a theoretical tool to this specific research theme.

d. Methodology and Data

In the present section, we present our methodological approach, which corresponds to a combination of ideal-types and thematic analysis.

Ideal-types were defined by Max Weber as a "conceptual construct", a construction that possesses similarities to the factual reality, although they can be changed (enhanced or diminished), depending on the purpose of the ideal itself (Max Weber 1949, 93). In other words, the ideal type's aim is to organize the analytical process directed at the influence of particular roles towards the NPT regime, which are enacted by the US and by Russia.

In addition stands the manifestation of their respective nuclear policies that, in combination with the roles they perform, creates a particular set of consequences for the NPT regime.

Therefore, and taking into account the theme of the current thesis, two ideal types were constructed, designated as *Responsible Nuclear Power* (RNP) and *Nuclear Super Power* (NSP), and abiding by the definition above presented, they will manifest specific traits that emulate the behaviour and performance of the nuclear states. We constructed elements that constitute what can be designated as a RNP and stipulated particular behavioural patterns with such a role. The same exercise was done regarding the other ideal type, NSP (ideal types and stipulated traits were developed in detail

in the section 'towards a hypothesis' of Chapter One and summarized in the Table 1, page 30). By counterpart, a RNP actor will use such venues as a policy solidifying stance, through which it will defend the importance and centrality of a mechanism such as the NPT and attempt to mitigate any effort that can jeopardize the regime's goal for nuclear eradication.

To analyse the manifestation of the above stated roles (RNP and NSP), we recur to thematic analysis. This method represents "a search for themes that emerge as being important to the description of the phenomenon" under analysis, and is centred on the process of theme identification, which happens through "careful reading and re-reading of the data" (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane 2006 82-83). Put it another way, thematic analysis is an exercise of pattern finding, through the analysis of selected data, with the purpose of uncovering recurrent and useful themes for the investigation in question (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane 2006, 82-83).

Concerning the data used for the analysis, the present dissertation draws on issue-specific documents as well as secondary literature while describing and systematising the NPT in the second chapter as well as in the first sections of the chapters three and four. Complementing this is the use of technical reports, made by independent entities that have had as a concern the study of (the current status of) nuclear arms control. This is the case of the reports by the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists and the assessments by the Federation of American Scientists. Respective reports were consulted, for instance, when providing the number of nuclear armed forces and the status of their employment in any given year. In addition, the dissertation made use of documentation linked to bilateral and multilateral platforms and agreements that involve both case studies selected. A reference to this type of documentation (with bilateral or multilateral origins) must be made since they represent the spectrum of actions that nuclear entities implement, develop, sustain or block (even though we are fully aware of the fact that the same type of documentation might have a different meaning and generate different role performance informing different perceptions, priorities and end goals). Among the analysed documents, one needs to emphasize the unique case of the so-called Presidential Nuclear Initiatives[6], a set of unilateral actions performed by the leading nuclear entities - USA and USSR/Russia

[6] The Presidential Nuclear Initiatives are a specific example of accord, constructed within the nuclear non-proliferation regime framework. This must be stated due to the nature of these accords. As stated, they are of unilateral character, and they manifested a serious tendency of reciprocity. In this sense, the first PNIs took place on 27th September, 1991, initiated by then US President George Bush. With such actions, the end goal was of double nature: on the one hand, there was a real focus and desire in promoting serious reductions of nuclear weapons, namely, some specific categories of weapons that were deployed, such as ground-launched short-range weapons. On the other hand, these actions manifested the US' aspiration for reciprocal response by their Soviet counterparts.

This last topic was fulfilled on 5th October, 1991, by the then Soviet Premier Mikhail Gorbachev, who was deemed by the Western block to be a more Western-inclined entity, creating possible scenarios of cooperation and ultimately, nuclear reductions. The Soviets responded in kind to the

- that ultimately, strengthened the entire nuclear regime since such endeavors allowed for major nuclear reductions and important security milestones to be achieved by both states.

In addition, the investigation pays special attention to the NPT Review Conferences, with particular emphasis given to the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference. NTP conferences are of pivotal importance for the nuclear non-proliferation regime because they allow for the revision of current efforts put in motion in order to achieve the elimination of nuclear arsenals whilst advocating for the peaceful use of nuclear technology, and simultaneously, the planning of the future of the regime itself.

Altogether, we analysed 51 documents (see Annex 1), which were complemented by the analysis of official transcripts of the interviews with the presidents of the US and Russia as well as with high-ranking diplomats of both countries, including the Minister for Foreign Affairs Sergei Lavrov, the Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov, of the State Secretary Michael Pompeo as well as the Special Presidential Envoy for Arms Control Marshall Billingslea.

e. Structure of the Thesis

The present thesis will be divided in five chapters. The first chapter is dedicated to the presentation of the theoretical framework, namely the Role Theory. It provides a brief explanation of the historical background of the Role Theory (including the contribution of Max Weber) and establishes the connection between the Role Theory and Constructivism (the latter a meta-theory) while also locating the Role Theory within International Relations. Lastly, this chapter concludes with a section on the construction of two ideal types of roles that will serve as the investigative 'backbone' of this paper, namely the roles of RNP and NSP. In order to summarize all of the information related to the

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reductions made by the Americans, even making further pledges to eliminate all of its nuclear artillery munitions, nuclear mines and nuclear warheads for tactical missiles.

In the following year, 1992, a second wave of PNIs took place, again initiated by the US. On 28th January, 1992, President George Bush approved the implementation of new reductions, this time being focused on the strategic forces. What this meant to the American nuclear forces was the biggest reduction of weapons in their history, since in practice around 50% of US nuclear stockpiles were eliminated. In terms of numbers that represents a drop in the number of active and inactive warheads, from 21392 to 10979. The Russian answer (Russia had been newly formed, becoming the successor of the recently dissolved USSR) came on the 29th January, 1992, by official decrees made by the first Russian elected President, Boris Yeltsin. In these decrees, it was stipulated that Russia would reduce by one third its sea-based tactical nuclear weapons, as well as half its ground-to-air nuclear missile warheads. In addition, Russia would also cut in half its airborne tactical nuclear weapons stockpile.

All in all, these unilateral actions were pivotal for the nuclear non-proliferation regime because, despite their non-binding and unilateral nature, they allowed for some of the biggest reductions in the history of nuclear technology and culminated with cooperative tendencies between the two ruling nuclear powers of the international system (Arms Control Association 2017).

development of these aforementioned roles, this chapter includes a table (page 30) displaying the rationale that lead to the creation of the roles.

The second chapter analyses the NPT Treaty and the associated treaties (bilateral or multilateral), institutions and legal framework, which all underpin a network through which the NPT exerts its influence and achieves its primary goal: eradication of nuclear arsenals. The chapter, in a first stage, delves into the historical record of the NPT itself, identifying pivotal moments in its formation, as well as highlighting important elements of its internal structure. The chapter subsequently analyses the normative power that has become associated with the NPT Treaty, while also assessing whether the NPT currently possesses the influence and capabilities to shape the nuclear international politics created by individual states and the simultaneous demonstration of old and new challenges that vex the NPT sphere. Finally, the chapter presents (old and new) challenges that trouble the NPT network.

The third chapter concerns itself with one of the selected case studies of this dissertation, namely Russia. The chapter starts with the presentation of the range of variation in Russia's role performance, and the associated historical examples, thus establishing the connection between the case study and the created roles (RNP and NSP), in a specific time frame: from the beginning of the 1990s to the early mid-2010s. Against this background, the chapter proceeds with the exploration of thematic analysis, which allows to ascertain two categories, namely **technological exceptionalism** and **special responsibility** that reflect Russia's nuclear RNP and NSP role performance. The categories in their turn are constituted by such elements as 'strategic parity', 'soviet legacy', 'defender of the international regime', 'critical of the US', 'concerned nuclear power', 'open for dialogue' and 'not a bluff'.

The fourth chapter analyses the other case study of this thesis, the US, mirrors the analytical process guiding the research of the Russian case. Once again, the chapter starts with ascertaining the extent of the role variation in the time frame 1990s - mid-2010s while referring to specific instances of US role performance.

Subsequently, while attending to the differences in the internal political organization underpinning the projection of the US' and Russia's foreign policies (and their relevance to the analytical process developed in this dissertation), we focus more specifically on the US foreign policy under the administrations of Barack Obama (2015-2016) and Donald Trump (2017-2020); the thematic analysis is therefore organized accordingly. However, in the case of the Barack Obama administration, reference to its first term in office is required in order to grasp the full extent of the nuclear roles enacted by the US during the years of 2015 and 2020. In other words, an analysis of the

nuclear policy structure constructed by Obama's executive, between the years of 2008 and 2012, is crucial for the understanding of the nuclear performance during the years 2015-2016. Thematic analysis allows for the identification of the following categories: **unique/shared responsibility** and **modernization** underpinned by such elements as 'moral obligation/revolution', 'global zero', 'America first', 'unmatched power', 'being forced to modernize' and 'second to none'.

Finally, the chapter then establishes the connection of the analysis of the US policy to the ideal-types proposed in the first chapter of the dissertation, by demonstrating how the RNP and the NSP roles fit the US policy towards the NPT, in the 2015-2020 time frame.

Following the analysis of Russia's and US' nuclear roles, the fifth chapter presents the conclusions and implications of the thesis, while also assessing the strengths of the chosen theoretical framework and methodological approach and suggesting avenues for further research of the chosen theme of NPT and associated policies of individual states.

1.1. Constructivism as a Meta – Theory

1.1.1. Conceptual Origins and Progression

The present chapter aims to introduce the theoretical framework underpinning this investigation, starting with the section presenting the Constructivist theory, including its evolutionary background, its key concepts, as well as the possible limitations, inherent to any of the theories of International Relations.

In chronological terms, the Constructivist perspective tends to be associated with what is designated as the "fourth debate", which took place during the late 1980´s and 1990´s. This time period was marked by a phenomenon of paramount importance, with long lasting implications for both the International Relations (IR) as a discipline, and for the evolution of Constructivism as a theory: the end of the Cold War. The importance of this event to the Constructivist perspective, resides in the fact that the mainstream theories - (Neo)Realism and (Neo)Liberalism/Institutionalism - failed to, in any way, predict such an event or provide an answer to the why it actually took place (Theys 2018, 36; Dunne, Smith and Kurki 2007, 20).

The implications of the end of the Cold War allowed for the funneling of the dissatisfactions and criticisms made against the dominant theories (as stated above), and specifically against those arguments questioning the formation of knowledge and methods through which that very knowledge was created. Consequently, we reach a need to explain, before analysing in depth the Constructivist approach, the definition of Meta-Theory. Such a concept is underpinned by the notion that this type of theory, in essence, is a *theory about theories* (Kurki and Wight 2010, 1-14). It is a theory that "does not take a specific event, phenomenon, or series of empirical real-world practices as its object of analysis" but instead "explores the underlying assumptions of all theory and attempts to understand the consequences of such assumptions on the act of theorizing and the practice of empirical research" (Kurki and Wight 2010, 14).

Some of the crucial elements underpinning a meta-theory are the notion of Ontology, Epistemology and Methodology. Respectively, they are the *theory of being,* the *theory of knowledge* and the *theory of methods* (Kurki and Wight 2010). The combination of these three notions, in IR, leads to the formation of processes of fundamental questioning and debates, since every single researcher can apply these concepts differently, thus resulting in various ways of perceiving the world. In other words, "meta-theoretical positions have deep (...) consequences for social analysis" (Kurki and Wight 2010, 15). With this notion in mind, one can assess the Constructivist approach as a meta-theory, since this

perspective is a sort of a "middle ground" or a bridge between two distinct ontological, epistemological and methodological positions: Positivism (with Neo-realism and Neo-liberalism theories belong to this group) and Post-positivism (encompassing theories such Poststructuralism) (Fierke 2010; Dunne, Smith and Kurki 2007, 5). It is important to analyse these concepts, due to their importance in terms of construction of knowledge.

1.1.2. From Max Weber to the Epistemological clash

It is impossible to disassociate the Constructivist theory from the "fourth debate", in IR, including its sub-debates. The latter comprise "Rationalism versus Reflectivism"; "Positivist epistemology versus Interpretivist epistemology"; and "Explaining (Erklären) versus Understanding (Verstehen)" (Kurki and Wight 2010, 20). Starting with the latter (sub) debate, the concepts of Explaining and Understanding (notions introduced by Max Weber and applied in Sociology, in order to be later borrowed by IR) are pivotal for the grasping one of the constitutive elements of Constructivism.

In a nutshell, "Explaining" comprehends the notion that IR theorists, by adopting this logic (explanatory theorists), emulate the scientific sciences, through the identification of patterns and general causes, with a special emphasis on the selection and rigorous application of methods. The knowledge created can be subsequently observed and measured, and in this way empirically validated (Kurki and Wight 2010, 20; Dunne, Smith and Kurki 2007, 5). The other concept, "Understanding" implies that such notions as norms, values, reasons, internal meanings and beliefs play a crucial role in the process of the construction of knowledge, as they are held by the social actors. "Understanding" also stipulates that language, social meanings and, again, beliefs are key elements for the constitution of the ontological aspects of social existence (Kurki and Wight 2010, 20).

Another way to understand the aforementioned concepts is to analyse the types of theories of knowledge they advocate, this is to say, to focus on Epistemology. While the "Explaining" perspective advocates the resource of scientific methods, thus aligning itself with a Positivist formation of knowledge, "Understanding" defends that knowledge should be constructed using the previously stated concepts of social nature, and that cannot be directly and precisely measured by any method. This epistemological position is called Interpretivism, which highlights the necessity of usage of those same concepts for the construction of a more comprehensive form of knowledge (Kurki and Wight 2010, 20).

It is possible to argue that the Explanatory view, due to its epistemological stance and methods employed, oversimplifies the social world, since it simply removes the elements that cannot directly interact, observe or measure, becoming a hostage to its own epistemological position, centered on the Positivism (which implements, at a methodological level, a set of quantitative methods) (Kurki and Wight 2010, 20; Hurd 2008, 307). The Interpretivist positioning in its turn would occupy another extreme, which, as mentioned above, aims at understanding the complexity of the social world, as well as to highlight that norms, beliefs, social interaction, all influence the social behaviour of the social actor transforming the eventually created knowledge. The focus here is rather on the implementation of qualitative methods (Kurki and Wight 2010, 20; Hurd 2008, 307).

1.1.3. Constructivist approach

Against the backdrop of the concepts presented above, it is possible to introduce the Constructivist perspective and its fundamental concepts, focusing on three main dimensions: what this approach intends to bring to the construction of theory; its relationship with other perspectives, namely with Rationalism; and the importance of specific conceptions and the medium through which they are expressed.

For Constructivists, the reality is a social construction. Unlike more traditional theories of IR (Realism and Liberalism), Constructivism defends that not only the individual or state must be taken into account when analysing their actions, but also the social environment and their interactions with that same environment, since the idea is that reality is not objective or unchangeable, being in the words of Nicholas Onuf, "a world of our making" (Onuf, 1989 *apud* Fierke 2010 189; Theys 2018, 36).

The constructivist approach also highlights the importance for the construction of that social dimension of the role of the Agency, instead of only being focused in the role of the Structure, as was made by the Rationalist theories. And, by introducing the concept of Agency, this approach (Constructivism) also stipulates that notions such as norms, rules and language are essential to grasp the interactions that happen between the Agency and Structure, as well as between the Agency itself (Fierke 2010, 189). In a sentence, the relationship Agency-Structure, in the eyes of constructivists, cannot be dissociated, since they have a mutual influence upon each other (Theys 2018, 36).

In order to strengthen the concept of social context, one can introduce the situational example created by Alexander Wendt. This example concerns the nuclear armament issue and the relationship

established between 3 state actors: the USA, the United Kingdom (UK) and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (also designated as North Korea). In this example, Wendt stipulated that the USA has to ascertain the level of threat concerning both nuclear armaments from both countries. Wendt presents the argument that the assessment made by the USA concerning the UK is one of lesser degree when compared to the one of North Korea´s, even when, in Wendt's example, the UK possesses 500 nuclear bombs and North Korea only five of them (Theys 2018, 36).

This example demonstrates the importance of perceptions, ideas and convictions. Concerning the historical, rhetorical and behavioural record of the UK towards the US, the former is less likely to act aggressively against the latter. The US' approach to North Korea differs from its stance towards the UK due to the image of aggression and the ensuing caution that is associated with the Korean actor. What is at play here is the manifestation of interpretations, by individual actors. This means that the social reality of these actors is influenced by their behaviour, which can lead to scenarios of conflict or animosity (Theys 2018, 36; Hurd 2008, 301).

Wendt´s example allows us to introduce the discussion of the debate between Constructivism and Rationalism, one of the defining debates for the evolution of Constructivism within IR. While both perspectives perceive the relationship between Individual and social structure to be crucial, the Rationalist side considers the Structure to dictate the nature of that relationship, acting as a constraint for the actions of the individual. This is epitomized through the "logic of consequences", which defines a "rational act" as "one that will produce an outcome that maximizes the interests of the individual unit" (Fierke 2010, 190). This position contrasts with the Constructivist perspective in which Structure has a double function: the one described and defended by the Rationalism view, but also the other one in which Structure is a constitutive element of the identity of the social actor (Fierke 2010. 190). Identity becomes a central concept for Constructivism as the amalgamation of the actor´s understanding about himself, and the manner through which the respective interests and actions take form (Theys 2018, 37). And associated to this notion is the expression of the importance of social norms and of "shared understandings of legitimate behaviour", originating the concept of "logic of appropriateness", which can be summarized as follows: "what is rational function of legitimacy, defined by shared values and norms" allows for the self to "become social through acquiring and fulfilling an institutional identity" (Fierke 2010, 190-191; Theys 2018, 37; Hurd 2008, 303). In sum, the concept of identity and interest cannot be dissociated from a world of social meaning (Fierke 2010, 191).

Lastly, the importance of language should be emphasized due to the fact that this concept is shared between Constructivism and Role Theory. Language, in a constructivist conception, is both a

medium through which the identity, interests, questioning and interaction by the individual are performed, while also a constitutive part of reality or of the social world that cannot be detached from meaning (Fierke 2010, 194). An example elucidating the importance of this concept is for instance the notion of table or the notion of the knight piece in a game of chess. The material that comprises both objects - wood - exists in the natural world. Both are valid on their own but they are adapted and transformed by being imbued with meaning, thus gaining specific roles and functions, which are transmitted through communicative actions, or synthesizing, through language (Fierke 2010, 189-194).

Through language, an individual can interact with his social environment and simultaneously extract from that same environment the behaviours that are correct and acceptable. These moments are called "speech acts" and through them the social context keeps on growing in complexity and generating new social situations, to which the agency and structure must keep on adapting. This allows us to return to the idea of Onuf that the world is truly of our making and continuously shifting and mutating (Theys 2018, 37; Fierke 2010, 197; Hurd 2008, 303-309).

1.2. Role Theory

An important distinction must be made between Constructivism and Role Theory: not disregarding these linkages, it is necessary to assert that the ranges of these theories are very different.

While Constructivism is considered a meta-theory, there have been several attempts to construct a theory that would be more suitable to analyse individual foreign policies. One of such attempts has led to the (re)emergence of Role Theory. Therefore, Role Theory aims at filling possible empirical, methodological or theoretical gaps that the other major theories cannot close or purposefully ignore (Thies 2009). At the same time, it is necessary to note that Role Theory is still being developed in IR, taking as its point of departure the centrality of the concept of role in the construction and development of social life (Baert, Langenhove, and James 2019, 4.4-4.5; Thies 2009, 4).

1.2.1. Background and evolution

The evolution and development of Role Theory as a theory by itself has a considerable record, if one takes into account that the concept of role predates the notion of the theory as a theoretical instrument. The concept of role is, first of all, borrowed by the Social Sciences, which in their turn drew

on the field of Theater. Some of the more prominent social sciences, such as Anthropology or Sociology, did perform this process of borrowing this notion due to the possible comparisons that could be drawn between an actor performing on a stage and a social actor - in this context the individual - who also has to depict specific actions, following a predefined script within his or her social environment (Baert, Langenhove, and James 2019, 4.4-4.5; Dal and Ersen 2014, 259-260; Thies 2009, 4-5). This development and application of the concept of role was carried out over the course of several decades, especially in the decades of 1920 and 1930, and growing from then on (Baert, Langenhove, and James 2019, 4.4-4.5; Thies 2009, 4-5).

One milestone in the evolution of the Role Theory within Social Sciences was the pivotal contribution made by the social scientist Kalevi Jaako Holsti, in 1970. Holsti, through his study of national role conceptions[7] allowed for the expansion of the concept of role into International Relations, specifically into the field of Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) (Baert, Langenhove, and James 2019; Harnisch et. al. 2011).

Although Holsti's study was published in 1970, it continues to present itself as an important contribution due to the scope and lasting impacts that it brought to the field of FPA. Holsti analysed 972 official statements, made by the highest official policy-makers of various countries, during the period between 1965 and 1967. The goal of such a vast and in-depth collection of statements was to allow for the construction of a viable database from which to draw solid conclusions regarding the roles of individual countries. From those 972 statements, Holsti identified 17 different possible roles that the states can implement when constructing and executing their foreign policy interests (Dal and Ersen 2014, 260).

The subsequent research endeavors had similar goals, and their effort was directed at understanding how the national elites perceived their state's role in the international stage (Baert, Langenhove and James 2019). The central concept was the *national role conception*, defined as "domestically held political self-views or self-understandings regarding the proper role and purpose of one's state in the international arena" (Krotz *apud* Harnisch et. al. 2011).

However, despite Holsti's seminal contribution allowing for the assertion of Role Theory within International Relations, the trajectory set off by it for the theory was not unproblematic. In particular, the part of role in the national role conceptions was disregarded as a result of the emphasis on the ego dimension. This approach while allowing for the development of in-depth research concerning the

[7] In Holsti´s words, "national role conceptions" can be defined as "policymakers´ own definitions of the general kind of decisions, commitments, rules and actions suitable to their state, and of the functions, if any, their state should perform on a continuing basis in the international system or in subordinate regional systems. It is their "image" of the appropriate orientations or functions of their state toward, or in, the external environment." (Holsti 1970 *apud* Harnisch et. al. 2011, 23).

construction of foreign policy processes by individual states and the influence of various internal mechanisms and procedures was reductionist: it excluded the notions of counter-roles and recognition (by others) from the definition, both used by Anthropology or Sociology (Dal and Ersen 2014; Thies 2009; (Baert, Langenhove, and James 2019). It thus, reduced the possibilities for the wider use of Role Theory in IR.

1.2.2. Key tenets

Given the objective of the present dissertation is to ascertain the role dynamics of the policies of both Russia and the US towards the Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Arms Control regime, it becomes important to specify the key elements of the Role Theory, in order to proceed with the research in question.

First of all, the concept that precedes the theory itself, role. The concept of role can be defined as "social positions, as well as a socially recognized category of actors, that are constituted by ego and alter expectations regarding the purpose of an actor in an organized group" (Harnisch et. al. 2011, 8). As stated in this definition, the concept of ego and alter have a significant impact in the understanding of this theory. Both concepts have the capability of molding the very notion of role. To complement that process of construction of the concept of role, understanding notions such as role expectations, role conceptions and role performance (or enactment) is fundamental to grasp the complexity of the concept of role (Dal and Ersen 2014; Thies 2009).

Regarding role expectations, the definition states that these are "norms, beliefs and preferences concerning the performance of any individual in a social position relative to individuals occupying other positions" (Thies 2009, 9). Also associated with this concept is the dual nature that expectations acquire, due to the simultaneous interaction between ego and alter expectations.

However, before further presenting this concept in particular (ego expectations), it must be stated that role expectations also can be applied to the so called corporate actors, which states are examples of. Therefore, the following definitions can be applied to both levels of analysis - individual or collective (in this case, to the state).

The ego expectations concern either domestic or individual expectations towards what is regarded as an appropriate role and to what it implies, whilst the alter expectations are defined as demands - explicit or implicit in nature - created by others (the other individuals or states within a social group or environment) (Harnisch et. al. 2011, 8; Dal and Ersen 2014, 261). In other words, it

becomes possible to say that the concept of role is interbehavioral, since the individual and the others have to take into account each other's role behaviours in order to reach a status of appropriateness (Thies 2009, 9).

The simultaneous interaction between ego and alter expectations can create a situation of stress, due to the fact that role expectations vary in their scope, general objective, degree of specificity or degree of obligation. Consequently, these differences may lead to one of two possible outcomes: if the clash occurs within a role, the process is called an intra-role conflict, where the expectations of the ego and alter are different; if the disagreement happens between roles, then the process is designated as inter-role conflict (Harnisch et. al. 2011, 8).

Yet, another weighting factor for the concept of role expectation is the notion that these expectations may vary as a function of the actor holding them, this being the so called role occupant or occupants of complementary positions or even the audience[8] (Thies 2009, 9).

Role conceptions are understood to be the "actor´s perception of his or hers position vis-à-vis others (the ego part of a role) and the perception of the role expectations of others (the alter part of a role)", thus allowing to create a connection between role conception and social identity. Another defining trait of role conceptions is their proclivity to generate contestation, since performing a role will always generate some sort of response from the others or from the audience. This process of contestation is possible through the implementation of language as the medium of communication (Harnisch et. al. 2011, 8; Harnisch, 2013, 9; Dal and Ersen 2014, 260). It follows that the dependency of the role expectation towards the role conception dictates that the former is controlled by the latter, creating a scenario where the other major concept of Role Theory comes into play - role performance or role enactment.

As for the role performance, it refers to the "behaviour of an actor while performing a particular role" (Dal and Ersen 2014, 261; Harnisch et. al. 2011, 9). And with this definition, another scenario is created, related to the possibility of one actor possessing various roles, which have distinct behaviours, ergo, different goals and levels of appropriateness. This is called set of roles and according to Ulrich Krotz and James Sperling (2011), the smaller the size of that set of roles, the higher the possibility of those roles being key parts of the identity of the role bearer and their probability to be used in different social interactions or contexts (Harnisch et. al. 2011, 9).

[8] Audience is one of the most important elements in Role Theory, despite being the most neglected one. Its importance is connected to the fact that without the element of an audience, a role lacks consensual reality, since the bearer of the role cannot know if the role is appropriate or not in the given social context. Adding to this is the notion that the audience provides "social reinforcement", by conveying positive or negative feedback towards the role in question, thus allowing also for a role to be maintained or eliminated, overtime (Thies 2009, 9).

However, despite this notion of smaller number of roles is an important conception to ascertain one's own identity, the fact is that if an individual possesses a large number of roles at his or hers disposal that translates into a better ability to adjust to various social processes that might involve the individual, in a specific social environment. In sum, the bigger the number of roles, the more flexible will be the response to any social environment (Thies 2009). Nevertheless, the existence of a high number of roles held by one specific individual or state may induce the occurrence of a process designated role strain or role stress, a situation where the actor is unable or has extreme difficulty in fulfilling the role´s obligations, due to the contradictions between roles that may appear and amount of effort that must be mustered in order to maintain such a big repertoire of roles (Thies 2009, 7).

Concerning role enactment, the changes that a role might suffer (at the expectation and conception levels) can lead to possible shifts in the concept of role. The first potential outcome is classified as role adaptation, and according to the literature, this implies a significant change at the strategic level of implementation of a role, as well as regarding the set of tools used to that same implementation. Here the ultimate goal of the role in question remains the same. The methodology of the role is what is changed (Harnisch et. al. 2011, 10).

The other alternative perspective is one of role learning, implying a profound modification in one's belief, or at least, a deep change concerning the confidence placed upon said beliefs. The development of new beliefs, skills or procedures through experience is also a means through which this process can take place (Harnisch et. al. 2011, 10).

Two further dimensions that constitute role enactment correspond to the amount of effort allocated to a specific role on one hand and to the amount of time expended in one role when compared to other possible roles, on the other hand.

The former (amount of effort) can generate two possible scenarios, both of which are related to the involvement in a role. The scale of involvement can range from either a no-involvement status - in which no effort is assigned nor that role in question has any importance to the constitution of the identity of the role bearer - to a total involvement status - which is the exact opposite from the previous definition.

The latter dimension (time expended) is connected to the nature of the role itself and in which manner it was acquired. In other words, a role can be ascribed or achieved. An ascribed role is one that is presented to the individual or state by the social group or by the others, this meaning that the role tends not to change over time, as neither the functions nor obligations associated (Harnisch et. al. 2011, 12; Thies 2009, 8).

Associated to this type of role (ascribed) is one social phenomenon named altercasting, a process "in which the relevant others cast a social actor into a role and provide cues to elicit the corresponding appropriate behaviour" (Thies 2009, 8). Summarizing this notion creates a concept where altercasting is a "method of socialization", through which new actors are introduced to an "existing social system" (Thies 2009, 8).

An example of such a role is the one that is given to the less powerful or newer state entities, (designated as novices) by the prevailing powers in the international system (Harnisch et. al. 2011, 12).

The other type of role (achieved) relates to the one where the actor that bears the role has acquired it through his or hers own efforts, being a product of the combination of both the ego and alter parts of a role. An achieved role is also more variable throughout time, this meaning that the role can suffer modifications in order to suit the social environmental demands at any given moment. What this implies is that the role bearer may spend more time defining and adjusting this particular type of role when compared to other possible roles (Harnisch et. al. 2011, 12; Thies 2009, 8).

Finally, it is important to emphasize how dynamic a role can be. Therefore, it is necessary to introduce the concept of self, specifically the issue of self-identification and identity construction, not only as an internal exercise but also a process molded by the social environment and its constituents (Harnisch et. al. 2011, 11).

To begin with, one can perceive this entire process as one comprised by various dimensions. The first dimension analysed is the one concerning the self, and this concept has two key elements, designated as I and Me. The I component is constituted by the individual values and disposition of the role bearer - the entity that comes as a result of all these different interactions. Another possible interpretation of this notion is that it represents the ego part of a role, from the perspective of the individual (Harnisch et. al. 2011, 8; Harnisch 2013, 11).

The other component - Me - is the part that is contained within the individual as well but it results from the development of a perception, by the individual, when it compares itself with or against other individuals. This Me is influenced by notions such as culture, norms or societal values, expressed by those other individuals. It is this perception, developed by the Me part, that can generate a substantial change upon the I part, since it can induce an identity shaping process. In other words, the manifestation of the Me part upon the I part comes as a result of the alter part of a role, within the individual. The end product is the formation of the Self, assuming a specific role.

Nevertheless, this is only a part of the entire process. For instance, who are those other individuals and why does the Me part plays such an important role in the construction of the Self? The answer comprehends the explanation of yet another dimension, which is the Society or The Others (Harnisch et. al.2011, 9-11; Harnisch, 2013, 11).

The Society (or the Others) is the source of the previously stated societal norms and values that weigh over the Self, and within this dimension, there also are two key parts, them being the manifestation of the expectation of others and the behaviour of the others;

These Others are a constitutive part of the Self, although they are of external origin (Harnisch 2013, 11). Their influence over the role bearer is also visible in the sense that not all others have the same relevance for the individual, or state for that matter.

There can be three classes of Other in Role Theory: the first one, the generalized other corresponds to a reference point to the I, since it is an imagined other due to the fact that it generalizes a specific category or identity - human being (category) or nationality (identity). The following type is the significant other, and in opposition to the previous type, this latter one is a concrete other rather than an imagined one. They are considered primary elements in the socialization process and examples of such agents are the family, parents or siblings. This type of other is also responsible for some of the ascribed roles that an individual might possess (Harnisch et. al. 2011, 12; Harnisch 2013, 11).

The final example of other is designated as the organized other and by nature it is an institutionalized other that has associated a high level of role expectations and an elevated degree of functional specialization (hence the high level of role expectations). Those expectations are controlled and based on the division of tasks and functions (Harnisch 2013, 11).

Finally, it is necessary to present to one other key component of Role Theory: language. Language is the instrument through which the manifestations of the Society and the corresponding actions generated by the individual are transmitted. Without the language, there would be a communicative gap, a barrier that would stop the entire construction of identity and role, and consequently, not allowing for the creation of appropriate states of behaviour.

In the words of George Herbert Mead, the power of language can be associated with the following sentence, which also serves to summarize the entire construction of role and identity: “There is no I without a Me and there is no Me without the Other” (Mead *apud* Harnisch 2013, 10).

1.2.3. Towards a Hypothesis

The present thesis establishes the hypothesis by recurring to two ideal types of role conceptions of (Russia's and Unites States') nuclear policies, defined by Weber as a "conceptual construct", an analytical construction that possesses similarities to the factual reality, although they be changed (enhanced or diminished), depending on the purpose of the ideal itself (Max Weber 1949, 93].

While ideal types are not found in their 'pure' form in nature, recurrence to this conceptual construct is useful as it allows ascertaining the roles that underpin US' and Russia's approaches.

The ideal types in question are designated as "Responsible Nuclear Power" (RNP) and "Nuclear Super Power" (NSP) (Table 1 summarizes the analytical process leading to the Hypothesis). Each category possesses specific traits, which are informed while attending to the theoretical framework used - Role Theory. The ideal types we put forward display their constituting elements as the opposites of one another, representing extremes in the 'spectrum' of roles of individual states developing their policies towards the NPT when attributed to an actor.

In addition, the Roles and the stipulated categories constituting them, according to Role Theory, cannot be viewed as static elements, due to the nature of the interaction that exists between the role bearer and the role itself: it is one of mutual influence. Therefore, one can defend the perspective of mutability of those same categories. This would mean that these categories would be more flexible and allow for the introduction of new roles, or sub-roles, that are possible to be formed and that derive from the original ones - RNP and NSP[9].

"Responsible Nuclear Power" (RNP)

A RNP role is the means through which an actor is able to construct an image of itself that is informed by such concepts as 'international stability' and 'collective security'. Referring to these two concepts, an RNP actor would develop a rhetoric centered on the NPT's global goal for the eradication of nuclear arsenals (along with other treaties aiming at curbing non-proliferation and arms control).

A RNP actor would also have a broad security focus, in the sense that it would tend to align its national security concerns with the ones of the international community. Translating this into the topic at hand, a RNP actor would not pursue the advocacy of maintaining nuclear weapons as an argument for national security purposes, but instead it would defend the idea that, in order to enhance its own national security (and by consequence, of the rest of the community), the debate surrounding nuclear

[9] This line of thinking follows the call of Breuning orients for further research of multiple roles (Breuning 2011, 32)

weapons must be reshaped and induce new efforts of disarmament and eradication tendencies of such weapons (with an important role attributed the NPT). In other words, a RNP actor would uphold the global objectives of the nuclear regime, by means of proposing new strategies and courses of action while at the same time advocating for the reduction of nuclear dependence in terms of national security. It would also implement strategies resembling "public shaming" or "increased peer pressure" in an attempt to subjugate those entities that pose a threat to the nuclear regime or that might practice any type of deviant behaviour, thus jeopardizing the same system.

"Nuclear Super Power" (NSP)

Concerning this other role, a NSP performance would stand in direct opposition to a RNP's. Such an actor would perceive the international effort for nuclear weapons eradication as a hamper in achieving the desired self-perceived status of national security. In that scenario, nuclear weapons play a pivotal role in attaining that goal since this class of weapons is regarded as the ultimate instrument to guarantee the survival of the state. In other words, the NSP actor would perceive the NPT as a threat to its survival, in the sense that if the NPT succeeds in achieving its goal - nuclear arsenal's eradication - NSP states would become weaker and susceptible to power loss within the international sphere. Therefore, a NSP actor operates under the assumption that such states need to perform, to the best of its abilities, any sort of activities that would foster the destabilisation and weakening of the NPT regime, which is contrary to its own individual interests, even when it comes to the collective stability. The same is true to other efforts and arrangements aimed at curbing non-proliferation and arms control.

In sum, a NSP actor is the exact opposite of a RNP actor. An additional lens through which such roles can be perceived is one of 'absolute' and 'relative' gains, the former associated with the NSP actor (contrary to the 'relative' gains associated with a RNP actor). By defending a concept of 'absolute' gains, an actor demonstrates the importance of interests and objectives, even if at the cost of others' goals (contrary to the RNP actors that would tend to prioritize the collective good, even when its own interests are at stake, since in the self-conception of such an agent, collective benefits are ultimately beneficial to this actor).

Finally, the concept of 'modernization' could be introduced to highlight the positioning of the NSP. To a NSP state, modernization of nuclear arsenals is critical to national security and regarded as pivotal for the survival of the state as a sovereign and independent actor. In this connection, the NPT is surpassed or relegated to a backstage position (contrary to a RNP actor, whose interpretation stands in

direct contrast: modernization is not seen as a required step for the construction and maintenance of national security concepts, but is rather perceived as a concept through which a RNP actor can demonstrate its commitment to the NPT, framed as a part of its national interests; moreover, RNP must be an actor aspiring to strengthen the nuclear regime, through direct action and leading by example, being at the forefront in matters of reduction, disarmament, non-proliferation efforts and peaceful cooperation when debating nuclear technology and knowledge). The NSP actor in his turn, will be the type of agent that will try, whenever possible, to mitigate and weaken the reach of the nuclear regime. Such a goal could be achieved either through pursuit of deviant actions or by instigating endless debates over methodology and technicalities, diverting efforts from the real goals of that same regime. In other words, such an entity, a NSP actor, would be an existential threat to the nuclear regime itself. Table 1 presents a summary of RNP/NSP while also developing the terms reflecting these roles in the official discourses.

Table 1 - Responsible Nuclear Power and Nuclear Super Power as ideal-types

Role codes	RNP	NSP
Definition	Emphasis on the international commitment; Nuclear reduction is a concern; International regimes, such as the NPT as important as nuclear strategy/arsenals; Collective good above individual goals/national interests.	Nuclear superiority regarded as pivotal, even mitigating international arrangements such as the NPT; Individual goals/national interests above collective good; Maintenance of the state's security is essential
Description	• strategic parity (to avoid arms race), stability • relative gains, • nuclear reduction, • nuclear disarmament, peaceful cooperation, • transparency, • global security, • strengthening non-proliferation nuclear tendencies • shared responsibility • 'shaming'	• strategic parity (not to be inferior, avoiding imbalance), power, military dominance, fear of lagging behind • absolute gains • nuclear strength, • nuclear modernization, strategic parity (avoid loss of balance/status) • survival of the state, sovereignty, • absolute gains, • unilateralism, disdain for international agreements, mitigation of diplomatic efforts

Source: summary of the author

2.1. NPT: milestones and membership

2.1.1. First step: United Nations Atomic Commission

Since the beginning of the nuclear era, the knowledge and practical uses for these (nuclear) technologies generated both fascination and fear, with the latter only appearing after humanity witnessed the consequences of the use of this knowledge.

In August 1945, the nuclear age came into full existence through the events of Hiroshima and Nagasaki (Sidhu 2014), two Japanese cities that became landmarks of the destructive power of atomic energy and the ensuing loss of human life. This scale of destruction and death created, among the members of the international community, the need to control, and ultimately, eliminate the use of nuclear technology for warlike purposes (Siracusa and Warren 2018). In order to achieve such goals, the participants of the international regime, specifically the states, needed to establish solid cooperation and simultaneously create a binding legal framework, influenced by specific sets of norms and principles (Sidhu 2014). The cornerstone for the construction of this type of cooperation, legal and normative framework was laid down in January 1946, through the first resolution of the General Assembly of the United Nations (GAUN) (Sidhu 2014). During its first session, the Assembly members stipulated that, in order to achieve the previously stated goals, a Commission needed to be created for the implementation and management of this collective goal. The subsequently created United Nations Atomic Commission (UNAC) (Sidhu 2014), in the words of the General Assembly, set as its goal "to deal with the problems raised by the discovery of Atomic Energy" (General Assembly 1946). The Commission had a specific set of guidelines, allowing it to table proposals regarding the cooperation in nuclear affairs. In particular, the Commission had to:

- create an environment favorable to the exchange of scientific information for peaceful purposes;
- guarantee the control of atomic energy to ensure its peaceful use;
- promote the elimination, from national weapons armaments, of atomic weapons/devices and all other forms of weapons of mass destruction;
- provide the necessary inspection and implementation processes in order to assure that the commission's proposals and suggestions were being fulfilled (General Assembly 1946).

Importantly, the Commission was under the authority of the Security Council, one of the constitutive organs of the United Nations (UN), responsible for promoting and safeguarding the international peace and security, including the nuclear issues (General Assembly, 1946).

Despite these positive initial steps towards regulation and elimination of nuclear great weapons, the cooperation in nuclear affairs was complicated by the ideological and political environment of this period (immediately post-Second World War), which can be characterized as distorted and volatile due to the Cold War[10].

The manifestation of distrust and suspicion between these two entities led to the demise of this initial attempt to regulate and legally control the field of nuclear technology and respective knowledge. One example of this status was the development, and later acquisition, of nuclear weapons by the USSR, thus obtaining the same international status as the USA, a nuclear state as well (Siracusa and Warren 2018).

During 1949 (Sidhu 2014), the disintegration of the Atomic Commission was initiated, a process which was finalized by 1952, being a weathering process that arose from the accumulation of continuous disagreements and mutual blocking procedures during the voting sessions in the Security Council (Sidhu 2014). Henceforth, the nuclear issue became unregulated and harder to approach. In the midst of the Cold War, other state entities started to develop an interest and need in possessing nuclear capabilities of their own. The nuclear club grew in the same year that marked the collapse of the Atomic Commission, with the United Kingdom (UK) becoming the third entity with nuclear weapons in its arsenal (James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies 2015). France pursued this same goal, and fulfilled it in 1960, becoming the fourth country to enter the nuclear club (James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies 2016).

2.1.2. The defining events of the NPT

The current nuclear regime for non-proliferation and elimination of nuclear weapons was shaped by the geopolitical environment of the Cold War, during the 1960s, a period where the opposed blocs - US versus USSR - were engaged in minimizing each other's rhetoric and influence. A set of particular events made the idea of a regulatory nuclear regime a reality. First, the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, a confrontational situation that brought the world to the brink of nuclear holocaust, a period of

[10] The Cold War was the ideological clash between the designated superpowers of this period, being them the United States of America (USA) and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) (Sidhu, 2014).

near extinction that lasted 13 days (Rebolledo and Mulas, "Nuclear Weapons II: Non-Proliferation, Disarmament and Peaceful Uses."). The other cornering event that allowed for the NPT to come into existence was the first successful nuclear detonation by the People's Republic of China (PRC), in 1964 (Sidhu 2014).

The combination of both these events culminated in the emergence of a new perspective, by the leading nuclear powers (US and USSR) on nuclear weapons, specifically in connection with the lack of proper regulation regarding technology and knowledge. The conclusion reached by the superpowers was that if left unchecked, nuclear weapons would become widespread, something that entailed an exponential risk for a nuclear disaster to take place, at any given moment (Sidhu 2014). There was also a deep-seated concern about the possibility of Europe becoming a nuclear battleground, due to the focus that bipolar conflict had in this geographical context, at the period (Rebolledo and Mulas, "Nuclear Weapons II: Non-Proliferation, Disarmament and Peaceful Uses.").

From this moment on, the efforts of the nuclear superpowers (US and USSR) shifted from competition to direct cooperation, in order to avoid the growth in the number of nuclear entities within the international system. The result was a negotiation process that took place between 1965 and 1968, resulting in the 1968 "Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons", also known as "NPT Treaty" (Rebolledo and Mulas, "Nuclear Weapons II: Non-Proliferation, Disarmament and Peaceful Uses.").

It became a full-fledged international agreement in March 5th, 1970, currently counting with more than 190 countries in its ranks ("Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons" 1968, 170; Miller 2012). It also possesses a set of associated verification systems, which are under the supervision of its enforcer, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), an entity that became one of the NPT's cornerstones.

The NPT, besides unifying the opposing blocks under a common interest, also introduced new discussion topics, such as the need for "Nuclear Weapon Free Zones" - NWZFs, the development of specific regulatory groups (Zangger Committee and the Nuclear Suppliers Group), that had the purpose of controlling the access to fissile material as well as to the required technology to create and develop a functional nuclear industry (Rebolledo and Mulas, "Nuclear Weapons II: Non-Proliferation, Disarmament and Peaceful Uses.").

However, the single most innovative and troublesome aspect of the NPT was its class of members that it created. When the NPT was implemented, the international community became divided into two separate groups, a classification that is still in force to this day: on one side stand the

"Nuclear Weapon States" (NWS), and on the other there are the "Non-Nuclear Weapon States" (NNWS). The first group of actors is only composed of five states: the US, the USSR (currently Russia), China, France and the UK. These are by the treaty itself recognized as the only official nuclear entities within the international system (Rebolledo and Mulas**, "**Nuclear Weapons II: Non-Proliferation, Disarmament and Peaceful Uses.", Miller 2012). The other group of actors is used as the classification for the remainder of the international community, thus comprising the vast majority of the signatory members of the NPT (Miller 2012). This differentiation is specified in the article IX – point 3 of the NPT, which states that "a nuclear-weapon state is one which has manufactured and exploded a nuclear weapon or other nuclear explosive device prior to 1 January, 1967" ("Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons" 1968, 174). In addition, this division between members is based on the manifestation of a particular logic, one that fuels the relationship between NWS and NNWS: a logic of bargain.

The latter concept is crucial for the NPT since it is what supports its very existence. For the negotiations that lead to the implementation of the NPT to become fruitful, a deal had to be struck amongst the states, namely those who had nuclear capabilities and those you did not. The result was a pledge, a commitment that each part was obligated to uphold regarding the other. The NWS pledged themselves to not help any entity in efforts of acquiring nuclear weapons, while the NNWS were committed to not undertaking any attempt in developing those capabilities or acquiring them, through other means (*"Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons"* 1968, 171). To this day, this relationship is the guideline that fosters the cooperation and longevity that is associated with the NPT.

The resulting classification is also one of the more problematic topics of the NPT, reflected on the theme of the pillars that composed the NPT. The treaty, at its core, has a focus on three main concepts or pillars: Non-Proliferation, Disarmament and Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy. They are represented, respectively, by the articles I to III; article VI; and articles IV and V (*"Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons"* 1968, 171-173; Miller 2012; Rebolledo and Mulas**, "**Nuclear Weapons II: Non-Proliferation, Disarmament and Peaceful Uses."), although the level of importance given to each of the pillars by the NPT members is quite different. The respective debate surrounding the pillars of the NPT is thus as old as the regime itself. This is so due to the interpretation and contestation that is generated among the treaty's members, the NWS and the NWWS.

On one hand, there are the NWS states, who maintain that the pillar of Non-Proliferation (articles I, II and III) is the pivotal one for the NPT, and consequently for the international regime, since it is absolutely necessary to prevent more states from acquiring nuclear military capabilities. In other

words, the NWS do not wish to augment their exclusive club, and the nuclear armed states, therefore, advocate that the NPT, through the IAEA, must apply strict regulatory measures and increase inspections. On the other hand, there are NNWS states defending that the pillar of Disarmament (article VI) is of vital importance if the NPT is to succeed in attaining its goal: eradication of nuclear armaments from within the international system (*"Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons"* 1968, 169).

All in all, the contestation that is associated with the pillars arises due to the different priority given to these concepts and their respective articles. The current perception relating the NPT is one that states that the regime has become a political instrument of a select few, namely the designated NWS members (Miller 2012). This position is one that has long been associated with the NPT, mainly because of the undeniable influence that the two superpowers had at the moment of conception of the NPT and the associated regime (Miller 2012).

Another milestone of the NPT regime is the year of 1995 due to its meaning for the longevity of the Treaty itself. Upon its signature and entering into force, in 1970, the NPT would have a validity of 25 years, thus establishing the year of 1995 as the year to decide on the fate of the Treaty. That process happened through a gathering of all the Treaty's members, a meeting that came to be designated as "NPT Review and Extension Conference". The outcome was unanimous, resulting in the extension of the Treaty indefinitely, thus being the core element for international efforts for nuclear regulation for the future (Rebolledo and Mulas**, "**Nuclear Weapons II: Non-Proliferation, Disarmament and Peaceful Uses."). This same conference stipulated that a review conference would take place each five years, in order to evaluate the condition and course of action of the regime, and if need be, reformulate and address new challenges and needs. Both of these achievements (the indefinite extension of the validity of the NPT Treaty and carrying out NPT review conferences each five years) are crucial for the capability of the NPT because by being an indefinitely lasting treaty, it is released from the conditionality of time and its associated pressure. In addition, by having a revisionary system in place, it can better keep itself in check, ultimately improving its abilities to address the issue of nuclear armaments and possible episodes of nuclear proliferation ("1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons" 1995).

Since 1995, there have been five additional Review Conferences, although their efficacy is, at best, dubious due to the fact that no real change was achieved in regards to previously established goals due to the political environment or the lack of commitment, by the Treaty's members to do so. An example of a topic that has been dragged over the years is the issue of establishing a NWFZ in the

Middle East, an idea first introduced at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference. More than 20 years later, there is no real advancement creating and implementing a NWFZ in this critical geopolitical hotspot ("1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons" 1995).

2.1.3. IAEA – the nuclear watchdog

In order to continue the analysis concerning the development and impact of the NPT, the introduction and brief analysis of the International Atomic Energy Agency must be made.

The establishment of the IAEA occurred after its legal document, a statute, was fully implemented in 1957. This document, dating back to October 23rd, 1956, was amended three times throughout the years, including on January 31st, 1963; on June 1st, 1973; and on December 28th, 1989 (International Atomic Energy Agency 1956, 2). As of February 5th, 2019, the IAEA has 171 members, displaying different degrees of compliance regarding the inspections procedures implemented by the IAEA concerning nuclear matters (IAEA list of member states n.d.).

The process of formation of the IAEA dates back to December, 1953, stemming directly from the contribution of the president of the USA, at the time, President Dwight Eisenhower (IAEA history n.d.). President Eisenhower's contribution took the form of a speech, the "Atoms for Peace speech", given at the General Assembly of the United Nations, in which an appeal was made regarding nuclear energy and the dire consequences that could arise from its mismanagement. In order to avoid such a scenario of mass destruction and loss of human life, the USA and rest of the international community needed to strive to fulfill this appeal and cooperate to achieve this goal (Eisenhower 1953). In this same speech it was also stated that diplomatic efforts were an important tool to reach the objective of eliminating, from the military sphere, the implementation of scientific knowledge towards the development of nuclear weapons, thus increasing the instability of the international system (Eisenhower 1953). In sum, this speech was the instrument through which a plea was made towards the stipulation of strong cooperative tendencies, combined with the increase of regulative measures directed at fissionable and radioactive materials. In addition, it also paved the way for the application of this knowledge and technologies in other areas, allowing tackling different problems such as energy production or agricultural needs, as well as instigating new medical breakthroughs (Eisenhower 1953).

Therefore, the manifestation of this cooperative and security need for global peace culminated in the creation of the IAEA. However, due to the array of factors earlier introduced that were present

during the 1950s and early 1960s, its role was not pivotal until the mid-1960s, during the constructive period of the NPT Treaty. With the creation and, then fully fledged international status of a treaty, the NPT needed an entity that could implement, in an independent manner, its verification processes, as well as, flag any scenario of violation or possible disruption of the nuclear regime. In essence, the NPT needed its own enforcer. Therefore, an entity that is prior to the treaty that currently represents came to be an essential part of the entire regime, since it is responsible for the verification procedure of all of the NPT's members, enforcing a system of safeguards that regulate the nuclear apparatus of the countries with nuclear facilities and nuclear weapons capabilities, ask for progress reports as well reports concerning the management of nuclear fissile material and level of production (International Atomic Energy Agency 1956).

Currently, the system of safeguards (since 1972, year of their introduction) is composed of three levels of agreements: the "Comprehensive Safeguards Agreements", commonly referred as CSA´s, which allow the IAEA to conduct its inspections procedures, verify the status of compliance by the states and collect data regarding the states´ nuclear programs, at any given time. The CSA´s main concern is the relationship between the non-nuclear members of the NPT Treaty and the IAEA itself (Rockwood 2018); the "Voluntary Offer safeguards Agreements" (VOA´s), are specific agreements that concern the nuclear members, recognized under the same treaty. The IAEA has freehand regarding the degree of the safeguards that can be applied to the nuclear program of said nuclear weapon state (Rockwood 2018). Nonetheless, those safeguards are only applied to whatever facilities and storage locations of nuclear material that the state decided to volunteer (IAEA Safeguards agreements n.a.); lastly, the "Item-specific agreements", which are applied to three countries specifically - Israel, India and Pakistan. These agreements ascertain that specific facilities and equipment are solely used for peaceful purposes and not for the production of explosive nuclear material (IAEA Safeguards agreements n.a.).

With this summarized introduction of the IAEA and its duties, the discussion can now proceed to analyse the NPT and its attempts at fostering a new international norm.

2.2. NPT an d the global non-proliferation and arms control regime

2.2.1. The normative impact of NPT

Keeping in mind the above mentioned state of contestation between the NWS and NNWS members concerning the importance of the pillars that constitute the NPT, one can analyse the results

of the treaty over the years, under the banner of normative value. The guiding principle of the NPT was its roots in the aforementioned "Atoms for Peace speech", from 1953. The sole purpose of nuclear technology and its associated knowledge was to be an instrument to advance human civilization, not be a tool for its possible annihilation. Therefore, ever since its inception the NPT, in broader terms, has aimed at fulfilling its top priority, which is the eradication of nuclear weapons from the international system ("Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons" 1968).

However, due to the geopolitical context that molded the NPT since its creation, that goal has been relegated to the backseat, until the discussion about arms regulation became a priority in security terms for the bipolar powers, at that time. That time came, to the benefit of the NPT, giving it purpose and real ability within the international system. And that power took the shape of bilateral agreements, between the US and the USSR, thus fostering the current international regulatory nuclear regime, much like the United Nations and its array of sub-systems are.

Out of several bilateral arrangements created between the US and the USSR, some stand out due to their importance to the non-proliferation and arms control. Starting with the "Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapon Tests in the Atmosphere, in Outer Space and Underwater", also referred as the Partial Test Ban Treaty (PTBT), from 1963 ("Treaty banning nuclear weapon tests in the atmosphere, in outer space and under water 1963), this treaty had the task of prohibiting the practice of testing nuclear devices at ground level, in the atmosphere, in outer space or underwater. The reasons that are behind these limitations come down to the severe effects that arise from the detonation of a nuclear device in each of these environments, generating different consequences and dire scenarios (*"Treaty banning nuclear weapon tests in the atmosphere, in outer space and under water* 1963, 45). For instance, exploding a nuclear bomb at ground level, besides the heat and electromagnetic waves as well as a devastating blast, also generates radioactive fallout that could take the form of direct radiation or delayed radiation (radioactive dust and ash), which extends the negative effects of a detonation both in terms of space but also in time. (Fey and Franceschini, "Nuclear Weapons I: Technology, Materials, Testing."). However, the same treaty details that nuclear testing in underground areas is permitted as long as the resulting debris and radioactive fallout do not transcend the borders of the country that is conducting the testing ("Treaty banning nuclear weapon tests in the atmosphere, in outer space and under water 1963, 45).

The significance of this treaty can already be stated due to the fact that by being the first arrangement of this kind, it established a precedent, a legal one, in terms of nuclear restriction and nuclear elimination. It also paved the way for the development of a line of thought that is commonly

associated with the nuclear debate nowadays, and that is the humanitarian cost of having nuclear weapons (Doyle 2019:86).

Another diplomatic positive example that arose from these bilateral efforts was the "Threshold Test Ban Treaty" (TTBT), which was established in 1974. Regarding what this treaty brought to the regulatory discussion, the superpowers of the age were legally binded to abstain from detonating any nuclear device with a yield higher than 150 kilotons. But more significantly, it was the first agreement of its kind that advocated the open exchange of information related to nuclear testing, as well all kinds of information that derived from the conductance of nuclear arms experiments (*"Treaty on the limitation of underground nuclear weapon tests* 1974).

The transparency and exchange of data is one of the core pillars of the NPT in the current system and one of the key methods that allows for the IAEA to fulfill its tasks to such an extent. Without that trust and transparency, the tendency would be of isolationism and increase of mistrust, neither factor that should be associated with nuclear weapons.

Turning once more to the division of members by class (NWS versus NNWS), the NPT demonstrated how the weight of the social norm and need of integration and acceptance by one's peers that even a NWS can be one of the best advocates for the eradication objective.

The example that reflects this is the one of the Republic of South Africa, a state that had nuclear weapons during the late 1970s and throughout the entire 1980s. After spending several years on the development of those weapons, it formally relinquish them in the early 1990 due to the drastic internal changes that it was facing, namely a profound regime change, going from a military focused state to a more open and cooperative external actor, worried with the task of belonging to the international community as an active and contributive member (Siracusa and Warren 2018). Ergo, the example of South Africa is one of extreme importance for the NPT because it proves that the values and goals that advocates can be achieved, and better still, lead to a better outcome than the maintenance of nuclear armaments. By going from being a NWS to a NNWS, South Africa strengthened the NPT regime as whole, creating a behavioural precedent that a nuclear active state can revert its classification without jeopardizing its influence and prestige within the international sphere. Thus, this example demonstrates the efficacy that the NPT can attain, although that is a trait that depends severely on the importance that its members attribute to collective good and international stability.

As far as the universality of the NPT is regarded, the treaty currently enjoys a status that no other treaty has: a near full status of adherence within the international community (albeit not universal, but it is leaps ahead of any other treaty, of any kind). That said, this point of universality

demonstrates the depth of commitment that the international community has towards nuclear eradication. Only a handful of states are not members of the NPT, them being Israel, India, Pakistan, North Korea and South Sudan, being the former four nuclear weapon countries albeit they are not officially recognized by the NPT.

However positive this last factor is to the status of the NPT, the reality is that even if this number of states that are not under its jurisdiction is currently this small, they represent a serious flaw of the entire regime because all it takes is a scenario of miscalculation or the event of a nuclear incident for a disaster of epic proportions to take place, in a geographical context that contains roughly half of the world's population.

In other words, the NPT's commitment to fight against tendencies of nuclear proliferation (both of technology and the required expertise) continues to be the regime's focus in terms of action. An example that highlights how successful the pursuit and institutionalization of the no-proliferation norm can be is the case of the Islamic Republic of Iran (henceforth designated as Iran).

2.2.2. JCPOA as Iran's quid pro quo strategy as a challenge to the NPT and arms control regulation

To begin with, the case of Iran is of particular importance for the nuclear debate, especially due to the events that took place in recent years. Those actions are the most relevant and recent examples of the success that the Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Arms Control regime can achieve through fostering collective cooperation and diplomatic instruments.

In order to grasp the significance of this example in question, it is necessary to, briefly, analyse the nuclear historical record of Iran, since its inception to the mid-2010's. Iran has a record of pursuit for nuclear weapons that precedes the Islamic republic itself (keeping in mind that the Islamic Republic of Iran only came into existence after the Islamic Revolution of 1979) (Mousavian and Mousavian 2018).

Ever since the 1950s and, throughout the entire 1960s, Iran through its close relationship to the US, aimed at developing a nuclear arsenal of its own. The existence of this same relationship induced Iran's affiliation to the NPT Treaty, right from 1967, ratifying the treaty, later on March 5th, 1970, the same year when the NPT Treaty came into force.

However, over the decade of 1970, internal events and the shifting of the external perspective held by the western bloc (lead by the USA) towards Iran, propelled profound changes in the status of

the relationship that existed between the USA and Iran. The culmination of this friction process happened in 1979, the year that represents the end of the bilateral cooperation between the referenced states, as well as signaling the need of Iran to guarantee its sovereign integrity, thus developing a serious urgency for acquiring nuclear capabilities (Mousavian and Mousavian 2018).

Such a need (of nuclear armaments) stood in direct contradiction to the set of obligations that Iran had under the NPT regime, ever since it became a member of that same regime. Notwithstanding the existence of those obligations, Iran opted to pursue the development of nuclear weapon capabilities in a covert manner, incurring in violation of the pillar of Non-Proliferation, namely of the article II. Simultaneously, by acting in such fashion (covertly), Iran murked the concept of transparency, an issue that would later prove to be difficult to rectify.

In 2003, the international community was presented with the full context of violation that Iran had kept, for several decades, secret, and became aware of the true status of the nuclear programme that Iran possessed, specifically its nuclear weapons branch. It is from this episode onwards that the example of Iran becomes of interest for the topic in development here, demonstrating the ambiguous nature that the NPT can develop, as well as elucidating the current status of the regime itself.

On the one hand, despite the fact that Iran was, and still remains, a member of the NPT Treaty and has never actually possessed nuclear weapons, it suffered long lasting punitive measures and the repercussions originated from intense international pressure, exerted by the most prominent entities of the international system, specifically by the USA (Mousavian and Mousavian 2018).

The Iranian case also highlights the political games that occur within the nuclear regime and reveals the manipulation that is applied to certain articles of the NPT Treaty. Of particular interest for the Iranian case, the manipulation of specific articles, namely the Article IV of the Treaty, which states that any state, that is a member of the treaty, has the fully fledged right to develop nuclear capabilities and cultivate nuclear efforts, as long as the knowledge and results that are originated from such activities are solely used for peaceful purposes ((“Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons” 1968, 172-173).

Nevertheless, the year of 2003 is also significant for the strengthening of the concept of cooperation and use of diplomatic instruments in order to foster a practical and feasible solution. After the discovery about the true nature of the Iranian nuclear program, diplomatic efforts were established between a select group of states and Iran. The ensuing negotiation process involved, at a first stage,

France, United Kingdom and Germany (together forming the so-called EU3 group), and later was expanded to include China, the US and Russia[11] (Mousavian and Mousavian 2018; Osiewicz 2018).

This process did not deliver results until the mid-2010s period, specifically the year of 2013 and onwards. The restless negotiation between the P5+1 and Iran over the course of nearly 12 years culminated with the creation of one unique document, in June, 2015. That document was the "Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action", or JCPOA, and which bound the six entities and Iran to follow a set of very particular measures. This agreement establishes that Iran can proceed with its efforts to develop its nuclear program with the goal of satisfying energy needs or foster the development of better medical solutions. However, this concession comes with the conditionality that the Iranian program will be under constant surveillance by the international community and, in particular, by the other parties of the agreement, represented by the international nuclear watchdog, the IAEA (Osiewicz 2018).

In a more detailed manner, the JCPOA stipulates some directives that the Iranian regime must abide by. Some of the main ones are the following:

- relating to the nuclear facility of Natanz, Iran would have to keep the number of its IR-1 centrifuges capped at a maximum of 5060 units, for a period of ten years. Also, this facility would be the only one, in the entire array of facilities and nuclear sites of the Iranian program, to conduct nuclear research and produce nuclear material (mainly enriched uranium), for a period of eight years;
- Iran would have to restrain its enrichment process to a limit of 3.67%;
- Reduce its stockpiles of uranium, going down from 12 thousand kilograms to a maximum of 300 kilograms;
- Redesign its nuclear reactor in the Arak facility, constraining the capacity of produce of plutonium;
- Convert the Fordo facility into a research center for agricultural and medical purposes. In order to pursue those researches, a maximum of 1044 centrifuges (IR-1 centrifuges) were allowed in this facility; (Security Council resolution 2015/547; Mousavian and Mousavian 2018).

Lastly, Iran besides having to implement the Additional Protocol would be obliged to also apply the "Subsidiary Arrangement Code 3.1", being this code one of the guidelines within the document that concerns itself with the "information on facilities and on nuclear material outside facilities" (IAEA Safeguards agreements, n.d.). The double implementation of these tools of verification allowed the

[11] The overall designation of this group went from EU+3 to P5+1 due to involvement of the Security Council in this matter (Osiewicz 2018).

strengthening of the inspections, conducted by the IAEA, over the various safeguards that existed between the nuclear agency and Iran. Through these processes, the result was the construction of a rigorous compliance system, in which the IAEA had unrestrained access to any facility, research center and testing ground declared as part of the Iranian nuclear program and could perform its duties at any given time (Mousavian and Mousavian 2018).

As it becomes apparent through analysis of the presented information, the JCPOA is unique in both what it represents and its real reach. Concerning its significance, it is the clearest example that cooperation, at the highest levels amongst the powers of the international system is not a far-fetched concept. It can be achieved and, when so, produce significant, game changing effects.

In regards to the NPT itself, such an outcome represents the pinnacle of its mission, for the eradication of nuclear armaments, through the accomplishment of the pillar of Non-Proliferation, which translates in the complete elimination of the possibility for a country to ever become a nuclear weapons' holder. In other words, Iran presents itself as the shining example of the success of the Non-Proliferation norm in action.

As to the importance of the JCPOA for the NPT in terms of influence and reach, such cannot be understated. The level of scrutiny that the NPT, through action of its watchdog - the IAEA - is unprecedented. This is possible to assess due to the conditionalities imposed to Iran in matters of verification and compliance. Such level of inspection was never attained, by any international organ, not even by the NPT regime (with a near universal status).

In other words, the JCPOA corresponds to a diplomatic tool at the service of the nuclear cause that mitigated the very notion of sovereignty in the name of international stability and for the advancement of nuclear disarmament and eradication. Therefore, the JCPOA is crucial if one is to ascertain the capability of the NPT, and above all, to analyse if the NPT is still a capable format and not a relic of the Cold War. Thus, taking into account the above example, one can conclude that the Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Arms Control regime can function and achieve meaningful results.

However, the international context is dynamic in nature and, when associated with unresolved conditions and political games from core entities of the international community, the positive scenario above presented can be severely undermined.

2.3. Current challenges to the non-proliferation and arms control: the fall of INF

There are some chronicle issues within the non-proliferation and arms control regime, in addition to the previously mentioned debate surrounding the main pillars of the treaty, which will not subside anytime soon. That is so thanks to the mentioned class of nuclear and non-nuclear actors (NWS and NNWS) that the NPT Treaty created, when it came into force, back in 1970. Since the division amongst members and their interpretation of the pillars is the root cause for this endless debate, and with no visible solution in sight, unfortunately, it will remain a severe flaw of otherwise a crucial regime.

Associated with this reference to the issue of the pillars comes yet another long standing issue of the NPT, namely the vagueness of its wording and construction of the document as a whole. The loose terms and various interpretations that are possible in regards to the pillars is another reason that fosters the aforementioned debate, since the problem comes down to interpretation.

That interpretation is connected to the type of terms used to construct the treaty's text, which in order to include the maximum number of adherents, had to apply a logic of the lowest denominator. The problem that arose from this was that any interpretation can be plausible; therefore it cannot be disregarded outright. In sum, the presence of vagueness and interpretation in a legally binding text is a bad sign, creating situations such as the endless debate about which pillar is the most important.

Adding to this already bleak scenario is the condition of the NPT universal status, better still, its near universal status. Despite the incredibly high number of members that the NPT Treaty possesses (Miller 2012), a factor that by itself gives full legitimacy to the regime, the fact remains that a handful of states do not intend to become part of this regulatory system, despite international pressure or even international shaming (Ambrosetti 2018, 145; Tannenwald 2018, 93). Hence the fragility of the NPT in fully asserting its influence at a global level because no matter the level of commitment and effort, there will be an interlude in its capacity to fulfill its goal.

Although, amidst such an analysis, a question can arise: "Why not amend the Treaty, having in mind the goal of solving some of these issues?". However, the nature of the Treaty prevents this process of amendment from happening, as in order to amend the Treaty's text, a majority has to be achieved, a feat most likely not to happen due to the huge rift that exists between NWS and NWWS (Rebolledo and Mulas**, "**Nuclear Weapons II: Non-Proliferation, Disarmament and Peaceful Uses.").

Moreover, although not falling within the NPT remit, there are some recent events that present themselves as urgent and troublesome issues for the stability and longevity of the NPT regime. To

demonstrate this state of stress faced by the Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Arms Control regime, the ongoing investigation will analyse the state of two specific treaties, namely the Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces Treaty created in 1987, commonly designated as the INF Treaty (Tobey, Zolotarev, and Kuhn 2019), and the more recent 'Treaty between the United States of America and Russian Federation on Measures for the Future Reductions and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms', also designated as the New START Treaty, from 2010 ("*Treaty between the United States of America and the Russian Federation on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms*" 2010; Reif 2021).

Related to the former, this agreement, bilateral in nature and established between the USSR and the US, was the instrument through which two interconnected subjects - disarmament and non-proliferation - were addressed simultaneously. On one hand, it put a stop on the rampant arms race that was being instigated by both countries (USA and USSR) during the 1980´s. It also enabled both entities involved to contribute significantly towards Article VI of the NPT, which advocates for disarmament processes to be created and implemented, since the INF Treaty effectively eliminated an entire class of weapons, with possible nuclear applications (Tobey, Zolotarev, and Kuhn 2019). More specifically, the treaty required that both countries did not develop nor produce any sort of ballistic or cruise types of missiles, with ranges between 500 and 550 kilometers. In association to this point, no support equipment and facilities, required to maintain and launch these kinds of missiles, could be developed by either signatory of the treaty (U.S. Department of State. Bureau of Arms Control, Verification, and Compliance, "*Treaty Between The United States Of America And The Union Of Soviet Socialist Republics On The Elimination Of Their Intermediate-Range And Shorter-Range Missiles (INF Treaty)*").

Although the achievements that the INF Treaty enabled in terms of nuclear control and regulation, the treaty officially expired in 2019 (Todd Lopez, Us withdraws from INF Treaty, August 2 2019), after the build-up of the relational crises between both states involved. During 2018, the escalation in rhetoric and the weight of national campaigns, led to more formal accusations being made by the USA towards the nowadays successor of the USSR, the Russian Federation. The USA formally accused Russia of developing, and later to have fielded, a cruise missile (designated as SSC-8 or 9M729) that was in direct violation of the directives and limits imposed by the treaty (U.S. Department of State. Bureau of Arms Control, Verification, and Compliance, "U.S. Response to the Russian Federation's INF Treaty Violation: Integrated Strategy.").

Despite the existence of mechanisms set in place to resolve any dispute or situation regarding the treaty, as well as the sharing of data and scientific research concerning the nuclear field (U.S. Department of State. Bureau of Arms Control, Verification, and Compliance, "*Treaty Between The United States Of America And The Union Of Soviet Socialist Republics On The Elimination Of Their Intermediate-Range And Shorter-Range Missiles (INF Treaty)*"), neither party addressed the core issues, specifically the accumulation of problems related to the lack of open channels of communication.

Therefore, with the build-up of these issues and the renewed set of accusations presented, during December, 2018, the USA formally announced that it would suspend its obligations under the treaty, due to the unresolved violations practiced by Russia, for a period of 60 days (Pompeo 2019a).

This 60 day-period was supposed to allow Russia to rectify its status of compliance regarding the treaty. However, this would not happen, leading to the formal announcement, by the USA, that it would withdraw from the INF Treaty. The withdrawal process occurred on August 2, 2019 (Pompeo 2019b), after a six month-period, interval stipulated in the treaty´s text, specifically Article XV (U.S. Department of State. Bureau of Arms Control, Verification, and Compliance, "*Treaty Between The United States Of America And The Union Of Soviet Socialist Republics On The Elimination Of Their Intermediate-Range And Shorter-Range Missiles (INF Treaty)*").

After the official declaration, by the USA, Russia also declared that it would cease to abide to its obligations under the treaty, therefore formally completing the process of ending with one of the treaties that most heavily contributed to the stabilization of the nuclear arms race and also to the strengthening of the NPT regime (Putin 2019b).

Regarding the latter example (New START Treaty), its context is a bit more complex. Still being in force and valid, for the moment, the New START Treaty was the result of the cooperation and understanding between Russia and the US, emulating the environment that allowed for the establishment of the previous analysed treaty, the INF.

Insofar, both treaties share a trait: both were developed having in mind a true desire for reduction and more restricted nuclear arms levels. However, and this is yet another linking point of the New START to the INF Treaty, is that the New START is the last major nuclear treaty of its kind that binds both nuclear superpowers, besides the NPT Treaty itself (Carlson 2019; Albright and Ivanov 2020).

To better understand the importance of this treaty, an analysis of its core elements, thus assessing how significant its contribution to the NPT regime is and what its possible collapse may signify. Through an initial reading of the treaty, one of the core objectives of the NPT regime is clearly

emulated, being that the eradication of nuclear weapons from the international system ("*Treaty between the United States of America and the Russian Federation on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms*" 2010). In broader terms, this agreement stipulates a series of points that both entities involved (USA and Russia) must abide by in order to not be in violation, and therefore not suffer punitive measures.

Some of those points are as follows:

a) both entities must strive to reduce, to the established limits, the number of their Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs), Sea-launched Ballistic Missiles (SLBMs) and Heavy Bombers, as well as their respective warheads, launchers and bomber nuclear armaments (Article II). These reductions must be achieved within a maximum period of seven years after the signing of the treaty;

b) a limit of 700 for deployed ICBMs, SLBMs and Heavy Bombers;

c) a ceiling of 1550 for warheads deployed on ICBMs and SLBMs, and nuclear warheads for deployed Heavy Bombers;

d) a maximum of 800 for deployed and non-deployed ICBM and SLBM launchers as well as to Heavy Bombers (deployed and non-deployed) ("*Treaty between the United States of America and the Russian Federation on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms*" 2010, article II).

These restrictions on the components of the nuclear triads of each party concerned with the treaty are applied to specific weaponry, and that information is also listed in the Article III/8 of the treaty. Specified in this article are the designations of the ICBMSs, SLBMs and Heavy Bombers that are supposed to be under verification procedures, as well as all their related launchers and support infrastructures ("*Treaty between the United States of America and the Russian Federation on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms*" 2010, article III:8).

The following articles, specifically Article IV, presents to the analysis of the treaty a couple of points that are of interest concerning the NPT regime. Article IV/11 states that any sort of "strategic offensive arms" that are regulated by this treaty must not be stored or placed outside the national boundaries of the state member of the agreement ("*Treaty between the United States of America and the Russian Federation on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms*" 2010, article IV:11). Such a limitation is an important contribution to the NPT Treaty, and consequently to the nuclear regime, since it advocates the non-proliferation of nuclear armaments, if only of a specific variety.

One other article of the New START Treaty that is significant is Article VII, which summarized, concludes that the information and the process of sharing said information, that concerns these specific armaments is a vital component for the longevity of the treaty and of the nuclear regime ("*Treaty between the United States of America and the Russian Federation on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms*" 2010, 11). Which leads to the highlighting of Article VIII, an article that states that neither party of the treaty shall jeopardize the effectiveness of action of the agreement through any of their individual actions when the matter of discussion is related to the regulation and limitation of strategic offensive arms.

The objective underlying this article is one of inducing predictability within the bilateral agreement, in particular sense, and the nuclear regime, in a broader sense ("*Treaty between the United States of America and the Russian Federation on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms*" 2010, article 8:1 and 12). Hence, the value of information is high, otherwise, without communication and the building of trust amongst party members, the reliability and endurance of such diplomatic tools such as these ones are seriously mitigated, translating that into an increase of instability and mistrust.

The efforts of the New START Treaty are undeniable. Its development allowed for the creation of a new set of limits, in respect to the number of weapons legally authorized. Over the period of seven years, both countries involved gradually developed efforts implemented to achieve the permitted number, specified by the treaty. Both entities achieved such goal during 2018, before the designated deadline could expire (Department of Defense 2018). In association to this fulfillment of this compliance norm, the analysis of the documentation and statistics available for public consultation, reveal that both countries are still in compliance with all the limits instigated by the agreement.

The year 2020 marked the tenth anniversary since the implementation of the treaty. As stated in the treaty´s text, in Article XIV, this year is the last year in which the agreement is still valid. Coming February 2021, the bilateral arrangement will have met its official duration (Carlson 2019), unless both countries, through mutual cooperation and understanding, decide to activate the extension clause, which, if implemented means that the treaty would be extended by a period of an additional five years (Article XIV: point 2) ("*Treaty between the United States of America and the Russian Federation on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms*" 2010, 16).

However, in recent months, the impending expiration date of the New START Treaty looms ever closer without any significant effort made toward its possible extension. Russia has presented

proposals for dialogue in that regard, without avail from the US, leading to the frozen situation which came to characterize the New START Treaty.

If this agreement expires and no further steps are made to ensure the continuation of a working nuclear regulatory system between both nuclear actors, then the NPT regime, in the space of merely two years, would have lost two of its more pivotal pillars in terms of legislation, in the form of legally binding arrangements.

In other words, if the New START Treaty collapses, the NPT regime will be poorer for it, that being translated into a weakening of the regime as whole and allowing for the stemming of scenarios of instability and possible arms race competition not seen since the 1970s.

3.1. Establishing the range of role variation

3.1.1. Russia as a nuclear role state: Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty (ABM Treaty)

In this subsection, the present thesis aims to demonstrate, how virtuous and positively influential the Russian nuclear role can be, while at the same time serving the objective of supporting the country's leadership's objectives of international recognition. To this end, we analyse the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty and the so-called 'Budapest Memorandum' (the latter of 1994), which will demonstrate Russia's commitment to the nuclear regime, something that has a direct bearing on Russia's international positioning as a nuclear role state.

Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty (ABM Treaty)

The ABM Treaty[12] was dubbed one of the more important arms control agreements to have been produced during the period of the Cold War. Established on May 26th, 1972, this treaty had the goal of curbing the growing arms race that was taking place between both superpowers at the time, the US and the USSR (Rusten 2010).

Specifically, this treaty's raison d'être was to prevent both of these entities from developing nuclear defensive capabilities, which would make the nuclear arsenals obsolete or redundant, or to put in another way, to avoid the US and the USSR from generating and fielding 'national defenses against long-range ballistic missiles', as well as from developing the required infrastructure to support such apparatus (Rusten 2010).

In essence, the ABM Treaty was a pivotal instrument to keep alive the nuclear logic central to the individual states' international agenda: the Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD) doctrine, a philosophy that was based on the maintenance of the viability of the idea of nuclear threat. If this condition were to be mitigated, for example by the development of new defensive capabilities against ballistic missiles, then the status of the bipolar stand-off between both superpowers would lead to instability and mistrust, since nuclear arsenals would no longer be a guarantee of survival (Rusten 2010).

Due to this need for a stable nuclear status quo, the ABM Treaty acquired a unique relevance throughout the remainder of the Cold War era and retained that status even after the end of the bipolar conflict. This Treaty went on to define the nuclear relationship of the US and what would be the successor of the USSR, the Russian Federation (Rusten 2010).

[12] This same example will be applied to the US, however under different circumstances.

The emergence of Russia as the successor of the USSR allows for the inception of the association between Russia and its positive nuclear role: Russia as a nuclear role state. The collapse of the bipolar relationship between the former superpowers came to be a defining factor for the new geopolitical actor that appeared, which was Russia. Unlike its predecessor, Russia did not possess the pool of non-nuclear resources that the USSR enjoyed during its existence, something that explains the reinforced importance attributed to the nuclear weapons by post-soviet Russia. In the face of waning non-nuclear resources and a shrinking industrial output, nuclear weapons came to be perceived as the ultimate guarantee against aggression or external threats, as well the instrument through which Russia's sovereignty would be upheld (Zyga 2012). The new meaning ascribed to the nuclear weapons as means of sovereignty, survival while also prestige and international status explains Russia's aspiration to continue to prioritize the issue of nuclear strategic stability (Falkenrath 1994; Zyga 2012). As a result, Russia demonstrated a keen interest in keeping nuclear agreements alive, including the ABM Treaty (Zyga 2012), as well as in adopting the nuclear strategic stability as a new philosophy of Russia's nuclear positioning, an instrument through which it would try to mitigate US military power whilst simultaneously preventing its own military decay.

Against this background, one can now establish the connection between Russia's nuclear positioning and the ABM Treaty: with no interest (or the resources) in developing new types of nuclear weapons or, for that matter, defensive nuclear measures, the ABM Treaty was regarded in Russia as a pivotal element in sustaining the strategic balance (Yoo 2001; Zyga 2012).

Such Russia's positioning helps to assert the argument (propelled by national security interests and needs) that Russia's policy has been characterized by a commitment to comply with its provisions. As a result of its particular political trajectory, Russia's positioning has translated itself into a role centred on responsibility and commitment, which ultimately benefited the Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Arms Control regime, since one of the key nuclear entities - Russia - demonstrated a serious commitment in achieving nuclear reductions and nuclear stabilization.

However, as it will be analysed in chapter four, the political circumstances surrounding the ABM Treaty altered significantly in 2001, manifested through the US' withdrawal from the agreement (Woolf 2000; Zyga 2012). Nevertheless, and regardless of all Russia's appeals and supportive rhetoric towards the ABM Treaty, the latter failed. The 30-year old treaty was officially terminated under the George W. Bush's administration, on June 13th, 2002, leaving the NPT regime more frail and depriving Russia from an instrument that could curb possible US arm race aspirations (Rusten 2010).

The US decision to withdraw was critical to the subsequent Russia's upholding of its responsible nuclear role. From the outset, the Russian establishment presented a fierce opposition to the US intent of withdrawal from this unique treaty, claiming that such action would, ultimately, lead to the collapse of the strategic stability, and more globally, to the weakening of the NPT regime as a whole (Sowińska and Dubrovskaya 2012; Zyga 2012). Moreover, Russia's actions and rhetoric did not originate from a belief or a sincere concern about the future of nuclear weapons regulation, but from internal insecurities, and especially its lackluster military capabilities. Thus, it can be argued that by pressure of very particular circumstances (reinforced by Russia's domestic political changes), Russia's leadership established the precedent of a markedly positive, supportive posture toward the Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Arms Control regime, acting as the responsible entity, focused on maintaining regulatory measures in place, rather than a posture jeopardizing core elements of the aforementioned regime. It can be concluded that the collapse of the ABM Treaty demonstrated that Russia was to a large degree an actor on whom the 'nuclear role state' role was bestowed upon rather than an actor actively pursuing the responsible nuclear role.

The fact that Russia was the positive influence regarding the ABM Treaty situation only demonstrates that Russia becomes the positive nuclear actor and the advocate of nuclear regulation when the opposite role (a nuclear ego state) was already enacted by another actor, namely the US. Thus, the position of Russia as nuclear role state corresponds to a role that is ascribed and not to one that is achieved (Harnisch 2011; Thies 2009).

3.1.2. Russia as a nuclear ego state: the Budapest Memorandum

'Memorandum on Security Assurances in Connection with Ukraine's Accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation' (also known as the 'Budapest Memorandum') helps to illustrate another extreme in Russia's nuclear role. (Budjeryen and Bunn 2020).

Signed on December 5th, 1994, it involved four entities, at the time, all with nuclear capabilities: Ukraine, Russia, US and the United Kingdom (UK) (Ukraine belongs to a peculiar group of countries that became nuclear weapon states via the collapse of the USSR, when the latter became extinct in December of 1991 (Budjeryen and Bunn 2020).

The collapse of the Soviet Union is, by analysis of the documentation related to the Memorandum, the key factor for its very existence. This is a plausible conclusion due to the significance of such a geopolitical event. With its extinction, the nuclear arsenal of the USSR became

part of the national forces of several new countries, of which Ukraine was a member (Budjeryen and Bunn 2020). Another possible interpretation is that the number of nuclear weapons states almost doubled overnight, a scenario that, if not addressed, would translate into the breakdown of the entire NPT regime (Budjeryen and Bunn 2020).

The significance of the Budapest Memorandum for Russia resides in the fact that the recovery of nuclear components and active weapons became a core Russia's effort in the aftermath of the Cold War (Zyga 2012); and second, in the fact that Russia being the successor of the USSR inherited the former's nuclear commitments and special responsibilities, under the NPT regime. Its subsequent breach by Russia was therefore significant, even though it is intertwined with a complex connection between Russia, Ukraine and the disregard of the latter's territorial integrity by the former, through an episode of annexation, in this case of Crimean peninsula, in 2014 (Budjeryen and Bunn 2020).

There were a set of conditions that were stipulated at the signing of the Memorandum. It established the following binding points to its signatory members, not taking into account Ukraine: the Russian Federation, the US and the UK pledged to respect the independence and sovereignty of Ukraine, as well as its existing borders and, under no circumstance, make use of the threat of force with the purpose of violating said sovereignty, independence or to interfere in Ukrainian affairs. Those members were also obligated to refrain from the use of economic coercion in order to gain the upper hand in any circumstance.

In addition, the nuclear states involved (the three listed countries) were bound by the legality of the document in question not to make use of nuclear weapons against a non-nuclear state and member of the NPT Treaty ("Memorandum on Security Assurances in Connection with Ukraine's Accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons" 1994, 3-5). In essence, the creation of the 'Budapest Memorandum' was the end result of a bargaining process between the NPT recognized nuclear states and an entity - Ukraine - that desired a deeper level of integration within the international community, but at the time presented itself as a liability to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Arms Control regime (Budjeryen and Bunn 2020).

This entire process rested on the assurances given by the nuclear states, specifically by Russia (Ukraine's biggest geopolitical threat) to respect Ukraine's territorial integrity at the expense of returning to Russia all of the inherited nuclear weapons, from the collapse of the USSR (Budjeryen and Bunn 2020).

With these obligations presented, the context of the Crimean episode and associated ramifications to the 'Budapest Memorandum' and Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Arms Control regime

becomes clearer. Through a real violation of officially recognized borders of a state, Russia disregarded its 20-year old commitments under the agreement and blatantly enacted the role of a nuclear ego state (Budjeryen and Bunn 2020).

In hindsight, Russia was able to enact such an aggressive geopolitical move due to the fact that Ukraine did not possess nuclear weapons. Ergo, when national interests, specifically the maintenance of a key geostrategic access - Port of Sevastopol - under Russian influence was endangered by Ukrainian policies (Putin 2014), Russia did not refrain itself from employing the use and threat of force, conventional or otherwise with the sole purpose of achieving its self-interests.

Such a political game by a nuclear actor, which previously was a key player in the normalisation of the nuclear situation of Ukraine (back in 1994), only serves to demonstrate the depth to which the performance of a state can achieve. With regards to the 'Budapest Memorandum' in particular, and to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Arms Control regime in general, the violation of its commitments under this document and the physical violation of internationally recognized borders of a member of the international community showcases the level of commitment by Russia to its own conception of power and what it perceives as vital for its national interests and security.

Such behaviour is by itself a damaging factor to the status of the regime mentioned above and is coupled with the fact that notwithstanding severe criticism from its peers, Russia did not curb its national discourse nor its aggressive behaviour concerning the use of force, if the circumstances deemed that as necessary.

All in all, the annexation of the Crimean peninsula serves to demonstrate a shift in terms of Russia's nuclear positioning and rhetoric, regarding a different significance of Russia's 'special responsibility' (Putin 2020) within the international system.

Hence, the formation of a nuclear ego state role by Russia is a reality that came to define the Russian foreign policy actions with very tangible implications for the NPT regime, consequences that are enhanced by the special status of Russia (one of the nuclear superpowers), through which Russia is one of the entities, supposedly, responsible for the global effort of nuclear eradication.

3.2. Analysing Russia's nuclear roles (2015-2020)

3.2.1. 'Technological Exceptionalism' and 'Special Responsibility' categories

Associated with Russia's nuclear positioning, there are two concepts that stand out from the analysis of the selected set of documents reflecting the official rhetoric. They are designated, respectively, as 'technological exceptionalism' and 'special responsibility'.

'Technological exceptionalism' category

As for the first concept, 'technological exceptionalism', its presence immediately stands out within the Russian position, clearly expressed in the analysis of selected speeches and official interventions made by the high officials of the country. This includes the Presidential Addresses to the Federal Assembly, as for instance in 2018 and 2020, as well as in the statements made during the high-level summits, such as Munich Security Conference 2019.

In these documents, 'technological exceptionalism' is mentioned, either directly or indirectly 20 times, something that makes it one of the defining categories for Russia's nuclear stance; and it is attributed special significance by the presenting officials.

However, 'technological exceptionalism' does not represent a one-off concept occasionally appearing in the Russian official discourse. Rather 'technological exceptionalism' is supported by a number of constitutive interconnected sub-categories, to which the concept of 'technological exceptionalism' serves as an umbrella. This is to say that under this main concept there are some secondary ones that complement it, and represent ramifications from the main stem. Put together, they allow for the analysis of Russia's current nuclear rhetoric and policy.

Those sub-categories are: 'strategic parity', the 'global peace', the weight of the 'Soviet legacy' and the stern determination of Russia in not caving to international pressure reflected in the 'not a bluff' concept. One could argue that in sum, these sub-concepts are a manifestation of the Russian psychological stance towards international politics best represented through the nuclear power. They are also present in specific sets of documents, some of which were already stated above.

Adding to those examples (Presidential Addresses from 2018 and 2020), the Presidential Addresses to the Federal Assembly of 2016, roundtables that took place during 2018, interviews with President Putin with foreign press (2018), as well the more recent UNGA address by President Putin (2020) also act as instances where the manifestation of this global theme (technological exceptionalism) took form, through its sub-concepts.

In quantitative terms, each of these sub-concepts was represented approximately 20 times, in the aforementioned documents. In other words, their manifestation represents the current mood of Russian establishment in terms of nuclear policy and nuclear international commitment.

Regarding the other main category linked to Russia, 'special responsibility', it shares a link to the previous one in regards to its pattern of manifestation within the Russian establishment.

'Russia's (special) responsibility' category

Contrary to the previously addressed category ('technological exceptionalism') that maintains a strong connection to Russia's domestic politics, the concept of 'special responsibility' is more firmly linked to Russia's action at the international venues, such as the Munich Security Conferences or the UNGA meetings, corresponding to occasions that represent a congregation of the international community as a whole.

Within those problems, the nuclear portfolio is a key international concern. Russia uses these meetings to boost its international role, through the construction of an image of a committed, deeply concerned with the successful implementation of nuclear eradication efforts.

Like the previous concept, this one is also structured in a category form, being composed by its own set of subsidiary concepts, which are 'concerned nuclear power', the one of Russia as an 'open for dialogue' player and Russia portraying itself as the 'defender of the international regime'. These secondary concepts are present in 48 specific addresses and interventions, of which the UNGA of 2016, 2017, 2019 and 2020 are examples, complemented by the minutes from the MSC of 2016 and 2017. The number of references to these concepts, respectively, are 18 times for 'concerned nuclear power', 16 times for 'open for dialogue' and 14 times for 'defender of the international regime'. Together, they strengthen the 'special responsibility' category, and the existence of both of these main categories will create a rather unique scenario in terms of role representation by Russia.

3.2.1.1. Russia's roles in the 'Technological Exceptionalism' category

This section will focus on analysing the 'technological exceptionalism' category in the Russian case. The analysis of the documentation that concerns the period of 2015-2020 demonstrates that the manifestation of this particular category takes place, mainly, during the second half of the period in question, comprising the years of 2018 to 2020. This time period becomes pivotal for the construction of this main theme, as well of its ramified concepts, presented above, earlier. Therefore, starting with

the year of 2018, the official interventions made at the highest levels of the Russian government will be the foundation of the following analysis. The key documents reflecting the theme are: (1) the Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly, namely of 2018 and 2020, both made by President Putin; (2) the minute that resulted from the meeting of the Defence Ministry Board, attended by the Russian President in December 2018; (3) the general conclusions that were the outcome of the international forum Munich Security Conference of 2019, attended by Russia's Minister for Foreign Affairs, Sergei Lavrov; and (4) the UNGA statements from 2020, again, given by President Putin.

In regards to the 2018 documentation, the Presidential Address made by President Putin is most relevant. In it, the President highlighted outstanding technological innovations of the Russian heavy industry placing special emphasis on the new range of equipment developed and the ensuing support systems that the Armed Forces (including the nuclear branch) received (Putin 2018a).

In his laudation to Russia's weapons production capability, President Putin made use of several videos, in which new weapon systems were performing tests and demonstrating their field capability (Putin 2018a). President Putin listed all the new weapons that would replace Soviet era weapons, specifically weaponry and delivery systems of nuclear warheads. The culmination of Russia's technological breakthrough corresponded to the presentation of the Sarmat ballistic missile [the next generation of Russian ballistic missile, with increased payload capabilities, as well as of range (Hans and Norris 2018a)]. The Sarmat missile presentation was coupled with the aggressive rhetoric that had, as its sole goal, stating the importance of Russia's national and international interests. While showcasing Russia's missile capacity, the Address also made clear that Russia's national interests and objectives would not be put at risk, no matter the circumstances (Putin 2018a).

'Not a bluff'

The analysis of the selected documents also allows to conclude that Russia's role, while including a warning, was also connected to a renewed understanding of Russia's international engagement: in his Federal Address 2018, the Russian president stated that due to the changing conditions of the international system regarding the realm of security cooperation, Russia had to focus on upholding its national security - in its the nuclear dimension - while guaranteeing that no Russian interest would be trampled on (Putin 2018a). Moreover, Russian interests are presented as inviolable and for that will be defended regardless of any outside positioning or consequence (Putin 2016).

Thus, President Putin presented the argument that Russia, by developing and fielding new types of weapons, does not merely make a demonstration of Russia's nuclear strength; Russia's

renewed capabilities for deterrence were necessarily presented and confirmed as totally functional, intertwined with the idea that if necessary they can be deployed if the situation deems it so. Ergo, in Putin's own words, "Now we have to be aware of this reality and be sure that everything I have said today is not a bluff and it is not a bluff, believe me" (Putin 2018a).

The year 2018 is most relevant for the category under analysis because of an event that is directly linked to the aforementioned Presidential Address from March. That instance was the "Defense Ministry Board meeting", on December 20. Synthesizing this gathering of Russia's high officials, what was central to the debate was the critical need of Russia to have a reliable and strong nuclear deterrence capability, epitomized in a technological breakthrough (Defense Ministry 2018).

The listing of weapon systems during the 2018 Presidential Address, as well as announcing further commitment to increase expenditure on future research with the purpose of guaranteeing Russia's edge reflect this innovative effort of Russia, within the international system (Defense Ministry 2018).

Adding to this is the example of the news conference, held by President Putin right after the aforementioned Defense Ministry Board meeting in late 2018. The rhetoric and mood of both events stand in stark contrast to each other, even if one is ready to discount some of the difference due to different target audience (to the extent that the presence of foreign press tends to curb the manifestation of egotistic or aggressive rhetoric) (Putin 2018b). The argument defended by Russia's President was that due to disintegration of the current international regulatory system, specifically the one related to nuclear weapons, Russia had become the leading authority in cutting edge types of nuclear or dual capable weapons (alluding once more to the idea of Russia's exceptionalism in terms of technological progress in weapon production). To a certain extent, one could argue that Russia's 'not a bluff' dimension of its role was legitimized by the pressure of international circumstances and self-perceived instability security needs.

'Strategic parity'[13]

A particularly important dimension of Russia's role is the focus on the 'strategic parity', broadly used by Russia when its goal is to foster an image of responsibility and special duty, whilst maintaining an assertive rhetoric in terms of means of action (Putin 2018b)

[13] Strategic parity is "a situation in which nuclear weapons offer the advantage of deterrence without generating the incentive to strike first". In addition, this concept entails the existence of an array of policies that are "mainly focused on preserving the ability to carry out a second strike as well as reducing incentives to expand one's own nuclear arsenal, thereby contributing to arms race stability" (Fix and Kuhn 2020, 8).

Rather than presenting any ideas on the fully-fledged arms race among the major powers, Russia's representative claimed to be focused on keeping the "strategic balance", in an effort to keep the parity level stabilized (Putin 2018b).

In the eyes of Russian establishment, to this day, the US is the only competitor of worthy measure (Woolf 2020, 2) a strategic mindset inherited from the Cold War era in spite of the rapid growth of other international actors. The concept of strategic parity with the US has been ingrained in the Russian establishment, leading to scenarios of weapons being listed, such was the case, in 2018, with the Presidential Federal Address already mentioned in this segment (Putin 2018a). Therefore, the issue of 'strategic parity', for Russia is one that has to be analysed in a comparative scenario, a comparison in terms of military might, better represented through the nuclear arsenals of both countries.

Attaining the same level of military might as the US is one of the particular goals set by Russia in terms of international power since through such objective Russia is able (or perceives as much) to secure its own sovereignty and reacquire its former stance as one of the decisive global actors.

Consequently, the military might has become one of the pivotal concepts for Russia, due to the factors created by the collapse of the USSR, in the 1990's, namely the loss of status that Russia inherited. However, by achieving this particular goal of 'strategic parity', Russia creates an outward image of hostility and aggressiveness, much of which is based upon its capability to develop new weaponry, specifically nuclear weaponry, leading to the possibility of Russia being alienated by its international peers.

The concept of 'strategic parity', in the period selected for analysis, was first referenced in 2016, in the Presidential Address made by President Putin to the Federal Assembly. During this intervention, President Putin introduced the notion that the circumstances of the international system until then (2016) were possible of generating scenarios of disruptive nature, leading to the formation of possible negative consequences in terms of international security and stability.

The main idea conveyed by the Russian representatives was that if a state of cooperation was not fostered between the global nuclear superpowers (Russia and the US), the international concept of security could be threatened, leading to the creation of a "global catastrophe" (Putin 2016).

This intervention (2016) can induce a train of thought where Russia can be perceived as the responsible entity, worried with the international environment, particularly with the possibility of a state of no-cooperation being generated between the two main nuclear entities. In other words, Russia is the

concerned actor with the stability of the nuclear regulatory system, and focused on maintaining the nuclear treaties alive.

At the same time, the 'strategic stability' concept, within the 'technological exceptionalism' category, aims to highlight how Russia is determined to keep its nuclear option as a viable option, going as far as using and maintaining any legal and binding international or bilateral agreements to do so. That is why the treaties, despite the many possible scenarios of violation committed by Russia (take the examples of the INF Treaty or the Budapest Memorandum), are presented as instrumental for Russia to keep the power balance with the US due to the latter being economically and militarily more capable than the former.

An example of this posture is the 2018 Presidential Address, in which the concept of strategic stability is portrayed as crucial while simultaneously being used to produce a certain mitigating effect. By coupling this notion of strategic security and geopolitical balance, Vladimir Putin aims to mitigate a series of presentations and with the listings of weapons and nuclear systems either planned to be fielded or already in operations within the Russian nuclear armed forces (Putin 2018a).

By, once again, introducing the 'strategic parity' concept, this time in connection to the aggressive rhetoric enacted during the 2018 Address, President Putin aimed to portray Russia as a responsible actor, not focused on engaging in renewed arms races, but only pursuing the goal of curbing possible tendencies for such an event to take place. The new weapons systems created, that were only in existence for the sole purpose of guaranteeing Russia's sovereignty and global influence. In other words, keep the status quo unaltered, and in beneficial terms to Russia (Putin 2018a).

The 'Soviet legacy'

Still within this same category of 'technological exceptionalism' by Russia is another concept, this one connected to Russia's historical background, specifically to its predecessor, the USSR, the shadow of which is as much present in Russia's positioning towards the Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Arms Control regime as Russia's need for great power status.

One way to highlight the influence and historical weight of the Soviet legacy in Russia's political and strategic thinking is to turn to the 2005 Presidential Address, by President Putin. In this address, Vladimir Putin stated that the breakup of the Soviet Union was one of the greatest geopolitical disasters of the 20th century (Putin 2005), while also corresponding to much of current adversities and struggles that Russia faces today, in the eyes of the Russian establishment.

The significance of this so-called 'Soviet legacy' is central to support the narrative aimed at justifying Russia's decisions in the nuclear field. As stated previously, the military situation of Russia during the 1990s supported its dependency on nuclear weapons (Woolf 2020, 4), and there was a stark difference in Russia versus USSR international power. While the latter was considered a key international player in the domains (economic, cultural, military, political), the former can only be perceived as such in some of these domains, specifically in the sphere of nuclear weapons.

This represents a huge psychological insufficient in Russia's mindset, which is justifying its ongoing efforts to emulate its predecessor in all spheres of power.

The concept of 'Soviet legacy', within the timeframe selected, was first made during the year of 2017, in an interview of President Putin to the French journal 'Le Figaro'. On this occasion, the reference to the USSR evoked the idea that before its demise, the scales of international power were even, with both superpowers dictating the possible outcomes for international events, a scenario that is very much desired by the post-soviet Russia.

The year 2018 also is of relevance due to being another example of reference to the 'soviet legacy' concept, specifically in terms of hardware and its dire need for modernization, a process which Russia has been devoting both its economical and human resources for the past two decades (Hans and Norris 2018a). Another element of the concept present is Russia's contribution for the modern nuclear regulatory regime. That contemporary arms control and nuclear non-proliferation regime is mainly inherited from the bipolar interaction of the US and the USSR, and often a result of bilateral agreements, struck during the period of the Cold War, something that makes the nuclear legacy of the USSR crucial to contemporary Russia, both in terms of military power and international regulation.

However, 'Soviet legacy' works as yet another reminder of the advantage that Russia currently enjoys in terms of nuclear technology and power. In his Presidential address of 2020, President Putin extolled the huge lead that Russia has when compared to other nuclear countries in terms of fielded and active nuclear weaponry. In the words of President Putin, "for the first time in the history of nuclear missile weapons, including the Soviet period and modern times, we are not catching up with anyone, but, on the contrary, other leading states have yet to create the weapons that Russia already possesses" (Putin 2020).

This statement by President Putin synthesizes the entire 'technological exceptionalism' category while serving to demonstrate the long lasting desire of the Russian modern regime in surpassing the shadow of its predecessor, the Soviet Union. In a way, this quote encapsulates the state of mind of the Russian establishment and demonstrates its current positioning within the theme of

nuclear regulation, one of dichotomous nature since its simultaneously manifests a responsible and 'striving towards peace' rhetoric and an aggressive tone, revealing the need to assert itself within the international system.

Classifying 'technological exceptionalism' category according to the proposed set of roles (ideal types)

Following the analysis of the 'technological exceptionalism' category, one can try to connect the case of Russia to the ideal types developed in this investigation, respectively Responsible Nuclear Power (RNP) and Nuclear Super Power (NSP). The case of Russia is of particular nature, mainly due to the type of rhetoric that it elects to employ in an array of situations, both of national (such as Federal Addresses) and international origin (such as UNGA meetings). Recurring to what this investigation assesses to 'technological exceptionalism' category, Russia is able to enact both of the roles of RNP and NSP. It is here that the difficulty of analysis of the Russian case resides since it is linked to the possibility for the simultaneous manifestation of both roles, albeit to a different degree. Considering this particular category, it is possible to conclude that Russia, despite presenting particular episodes of international commitment and leniency towards international security and stability (through the advocacy of the need for strategic stability and the urgent necessity to maintain the nuclear agreements viable, even by fostering debate and attempts of cooperation), at the end of the day, can be classified as a NSP actor. The year of 2018 is especially important to the consolidation of this role. This classification is underpinned by the message that Russian interests are above the collective ones, coupled with the pursuit of great power status as a remnant of the Soviet era superpower legacy. The 'technological exceptionalism' and the ensuing advocacy of technological superiority on the part of the Russian establishment become central features of Russia as an NSP actor. These innovations allow challenging the international status quo, and eventually changing it in Russia's favor, regardless of the possible costs to the international nuclear regime commitment. That being said, this general classification must be carefully assessed against the instances of Russia projecting a RNP role. Eventually, and unlike what will be concluded regarding the case of the US, Russia's role projection is afflicted by a consistent inconsistency as one of its core traits. This apparent role paradox parallels Russia's own identity dynamics (Zevelev 2016,8). This ineptitude to define oneself, in a clear fashion, is also notable in the nuclear realm. Consequently, taking into account the information analysed and presented that is associated to the category created, Russia tends to manifest a strong NSP behaviour, however never in an independent manner, since the opposite role, RNP, more often than not is

present, acting as a diluter for some of the more aggressive rhetoric adopted by Russia's representatives.

3.2.1.2. Russia's roles in the 'Special Responsibility' category

The following section aims at presenting the other composing category that, in this investigation, is associated with Russia: the one of 'special responsibility'. This same section, similarly to the previous one, will be composed by some sub-concepts, that when analysed together allow to assess the extent of Russia's positive role within the international nuclear regime.

Concerning the time frame of analysis (equal to the first category, 2015-2020), this second category has a wider range of manifestations, unlike the previously presented one, circumscribed mainly to 2018 and 2020. Through the analysis of the documentation selected and confined to this time frame of 2015 to 2020, the 'special responsibility' category manifests itself throughout the entire period in question, excluding the year of 2015.

However, two years within this timetable can be highlighted, them being the years of 2018 and 2020, respectively. The fact that these are the same years that are considered as pivotal for the construction of the 'technological exceptionalism' category already presents a possible line of thought that will be later developed, in the conclusions. Another particularity associated with this category is its longevity within the Russian establishment, when compared with the previous one. The earliest mentions to this second category (and its elements) in question are made during the year of 2016, at the UNGA meetings, in which Russia was represented by its Minister for Foreign Affairs, Sergei Lavrov, thus introducing yet another layer of complexity to the Russian case in terms of assessment of which is the dominant role concerning nuclear foreign policy.

Similarly to the previous category, a list of instances where this other category is mentioned (directly or indirectly) is required. Therefore, some of the key documents that support the construction of the 'special responsibility' category are: (1) Presidential Addresses of President Putin from 2018 to 2020; (2) UNGA statements, comprising the years of 2016 to 2020; and, (3) Munich Security Conferences minutes from 2016 and 2017.

With this information presented, one can begin the analysis of this documentation and assess the category at hand and its layers, composed by the following concepts: 'Defender of the international regime', 'Concerned Nuclear Power', 'Critical of the US' and, 'Open for dialogue'.

'Special Responsibility' category

The 'special responsibility' category - resonates especially within the Russian case when analysing its nuclear stance in the period in question. Through the role of president, Vladimir Putin introduced this notion of responsibility that Russia possesses in the year of 2018, a news conference that counted with the participation of the United States representatives. In broad terms, the essence of this intervention can be summarized in the idea that Russia, at this venue, conveyed the idea that due to the historical background, (namely its classification as a "major nuclear power") Russia and the US must strive in securing the international system, as well fostering an increase in terms of relational stability, especially amongst nuclear powers (Putin 2018c).

To that end, Russia demonstrated a will to engage in real attempts to strengthen the international system, in particular the nuclear non-proliferation regime, by positioning itself as the innovative policy player, willing to create proposals of action in order to fulfill those goals (Putin 2018c). The recurrence of the reference to the concept by President Putin over the years reveals the extent to which the Russian establishment is willing to go if the global objective is to create the image that Russia is a critically important nuclear policy actor and a pivotal pillar of the nuclear non-proliferation regime.

Examples of these efforts are also present in more recent interventions made by the Russian president, in particular his Federal Address of January, 2020 and, his intervention at the UNGA meetings, held in September of this same year. Unlike the previous UNGA meetings, which were attended by the Minister Lavrov, the meeting of this year counted with the participation of President Putin, an exception from the usual practice of Russia being represented by the Foreign Minister. This level of representation conveyed the idea of Russia's commitment and its true concern with the future of the international community, reminding that collective efforts must be focused on not only environmental or development challenges, but also include the topic of arms control, in particular of nuclear arsenals and the development of new technologies

In his intervention, President Putin addressed the topic of the last remaining major nuclear treaty in action, the New START, and the urgency that this agreement demands since it is overdue to expire in February 2021. Simultaneously, President Putin introduced once more the issue of 'special responsibility' by reaffirming Russian willingness to solve this impending international crisis, represented by the possible 'no bilateral treaty' scenario between the two major nuclear powers since the 1970s, a condition that would foster instability and possibly mistrust (U.N. GAOR/Russia 2020, 50). A 'no-treaty' framework would represent a huge back stepping for both entities involved (Russia and the US) and for the nuclear regulatory regime overall.

Regarding the Federal Address made in January, this latter was the first instance of reference of this particular concept of responsibility ('special responsibility') by Russia. However, due to the nature of the discourse in question, the attached message was a more aggressive one than the one given at the United Nations. Hence the conclusion that, amidst playing the concept of responsibility in an attempt of boosting its international stance, Russia did not let pass the opportunity to assert the importance that its national sphere has, reflected through its nuclear arsenal (Putin 2020). Therefore, while the category 'special responsibility' is primarily associated with a scenario in which Russia can be classified as a RNP actor; the reality is that Russia's role has a complex and oscillatory nature allowing for the manifestation of the opposite role (NSP).

This being said, this investigation still advocates that, in these circumstances, the 'special responsibility' category is central to Russia's projection of the RNP role.

'Defender of the international regime' and 'Open for dialogue'

Attempting to develop further this main conceptual hub of the 'special responsibility', the investigation can introduce the other constitutive elements of this category in particular. What follows will be the amalgamation of two of those concepts, since their relationship is one of interconnectivity, owing this fact to the main concept that both come to defend - the stability of the international regime.

One of the factors behind the idea of international stability of arms control, with a special emphasis given on nuclear arms. Respective efforts and treaties present themselves as exceptionally useful tools for Russia to develop a more influential role within the international community. In the current investigation, this aspiration for a higher degree of influence by Russia can be summarized in the concept of 'Defender of the International regime', which in its turn, is complemented with the 'open for dialogue' rhetoric. Both concepts allow for Russia to create a nuclear role, through which it can boost what can be perceived as RNP behaviour, altering the external perception that it may have by other states, thus increasing its international stance as a result.

The first concept ('Defender of the International regime') was introduced by the Minister Sergei Lavrov, at his UNGA intervention, during 2016. At the head of this stage (UNGA), Russia demonstrated its character towards the state of the nuclear regime, showing a deep concern for the state in which, at the time, that same regime was. It advocated a serious recommitment to the core element of the nuclear regime - the NPT Treaty - especially by the nuclear powers. Going further in the effort of developing this image of positive influence, Minister Lavrov's statements create the scenario of Russia as an endless herald for the nuclear eradication cause (U.N. GAOR/Russia 2016, 41).

In addition, President Putin also contributed to this unique concept of responsibility that Russia must uphold, by stating in his Federal Address of the same year (2016), that Russia possesses a record of holding, to the highest standards, some of the key values and norms that came to define the international system, such as justice and trust (Putin 2016), as well as being the advocate for more cooperative initiatives between states and organizations, highlighting the centrality of institutions such as the United Nations (Putin 2016).

Through this self-attributed concept of defender, Russia can foster, on a deeper level, the rhetoric of being a pivotal actor for the international community, in a general manner, but a key entity when the discussion concerns the topic of nuclear arsenals and initiatives to eradicate them from the international scene. Thus, it can be argued that Russia forces a certain role upon the remainder of the international community, is an attempt to create an image that alludes, in broader terms, to the 'special responsibility' concept that Russia also has associated to itself, in an effort to gain more political and regulative power amongst its peers.

In close association to this first concept stands the previously mentioned 'open for dialogue' concept, one that has come to also define Russia's behaviour in recent times, regarding the topic in analysis (nuclear regime). Similarly to the first concept of this section, its manifestation also takes place during 2016, once more through actions of President Putin, the aforementioned Federal Address that took place during this year.

In this intervention, President Putin made extensive reference to the need to enhance cooperation between key nuclear entities, such as Russia, China and the US, due to their capability for shaping regional and international events, as well the international order itself (Putin 2016).

Such levels of cooperation can only be achieved through dialogue and transparency, and President Putin highlighted that both Russia and the US have a "shared responsibility to ensure international security and stability" as well as to "strengthen non-proliferation regimes" (Putin 2016).

In the words of President Putin, "Russia is (...) ready to work with the (...) US administration" in order to foster the renewal of the bilateral relationship, which is beneficial for both actors (Putin 2016).

The reinforcement of this concept of openness by Russia is made throughout the following years of the period selected for analysis, although with small nuances. The fact that in the years of 2017, 2018 (a crucial year regarding Russia's nuclear rhetoric), 2019 and 2020 are all being examples for the reintroduction of this willingness to talk and cooperate by the Russian side

demonstrates that Russia has the capability to adjust to international circumstances, when such political effort suits its needs.

Shedding a bit more light over these years, 2017 serves as an example due to the rhetoric presented by Minister Sergei Lavrov, at his intervention at the UNGA meeting. While at it, Minister Lavrov induced this concept of dialogue by stating that Russia "has always been, and always will be, open" to cooperate at deeper levels for the benefit of the international regime and with those that can respect the values of equality and mutual esteem (U.N GAOR/Russia 2017, 27).

This presented, one can reach the year of 2018, deemed as crucial by the research at hand. Here, the concept being analysed ('open for dialogue') is associated with President Putin's Federal Address and his intervention at a Defense Roundtable, also held in the same year. While both instances are connected to the 'technological exceptionalism' category, thus strengthening the construction of the NSP role, they are also pertinent to the development of the role RNP, under the banner of the concept of 'open for dialogue'.

Amidst both interventions, President Putin alluded at a deteriorating status of the bilateral relation between Russia and the US over the last 15 years (Putin 2018a) and that despite the dire environment surrounding the nuclear situation of both countries (presented in both documents as an eminent arms race) (Putin 2018a; Defense Ministry 2018), President Putin once more pleads to the other involved party (US) that there is still room for talks and time to repair the damage caused by the communicational ineptitude of both countries involved (Defense Ministry 2018).

Analyzing the statement of the Russian president, one can highlight that despite the scenario of friction between both nuclear powers, Russia is predispose to engage in real debate and create a more stable and transparent relation with its counterpart, since at the end of all the process, the global security is at stake and due to the concept of 'special responsibility' that both countries have, they must lead the efforts in achieving that very same stability and security.

Fast forwarding to the year of 2020, again through the contribution of President Putin at the UNGA meeting of this year, the concept of dialogue is once more reinforced. Although it is a continuation of the idea presented in the previous year (2019) by Minister Sergei Lavrov, at the same meeting, the issue of dialogue and its need to take place was associated, this time, to the impending need for the extension process of the New START Treaty to take place.

In 2020, President Putin brought that theme back to the discussion and stated that the earlier efforts presented at the 2019 UNGA meeting must not be forgotten but, instead worked upon in order to guarantee the survival of the treaty in question (U.N. GAOR/Russia 2020, 50).

The manifestation of these two particular concepts ('Defender of the international regime' and 'open for dialogue'), elements of the 'special responsibility' category, is peculiar taking into account the record of Russia in regards to nuclear policy, in recent years. While Russia is usually associated with aggressive rhetoric, coupled with equally dangerous political and military moves, through these two concepts Russia played a different game.

It revealed that, if need be, it can alter its stance, aligning itself with the mainstream rhetoric, one that tends to be cooperative and positive in nature, both traits that are not normally connected to Russia.

Through the use of both these concepts in particular, Russia is able to alter its external image and, simultaneously, enact a soft power approach, by presenting itself as the entity that can lead international efforts regarding nuclear regulation while demonstrating an open willingness to hear and debate with others.

In other words, Russia can create a new narrative, and indeed it has done just that, which in term reflects in the attribution of the RNP role to this case study. However, just as in the previous category ('technological exceptionalism'), there is evidence of the presence of that aggressive behaviour, more associated with a NSP role.

Therefore, Russia in this segment demonstrates a toned down rhetoric, aiming at fostering a change in perspective, but it is never uncoupled from the NSP rhetoric. In essence Russia also manifests its ambiguity in terms of roles within the 'special responsibility' category, as much as it does in the former one, although in this section it presents a more RNP performance, acting in a rather positive and cooperative manner with the international community.

'Concerned Nuclear Power' and 'Critical of US'

Similar to what was made with regard to the two previous concepts, this investigation will proceed in the same fashion by analysing both of the last two elements that compose the 'special responsibility' category. Those elements are, respectively, the 'Concerned Nuclear Power' and the 'Critical of US' concepts.

Such an analytical process is made due to the same factor that allowed the combined analysis with the previous concepts: the existence of a common denominator, which is the concern demonstrated towards the nuclear international regime and particular actions made that affect the longevity of that same regime.

Starting with the 'Concerned Nuclear Power' concept, firstly one can state that its manifestation within the Russian case is curious, at the very least. The assessment derives from the analysis of the documentation related to Russia and its nuclear stance in recent years, which creates a scenario with mixed results. While Russia, as presented in the 'technological exceptionalism' category defended its aggressive behaviour as a requirement to respond to shifting conditions of the international regime, it also generated the concept of responsibility, albeit in a Russian fashion.

First introduced in 2016, this concept of concern was brought by Minister for Foreign Affairs Sergei Lavrov, in his UNGA intervention of that year, as well as by then Prime Minister of the Russian Federation, Dmitri Medvedev, this latter at the 2016 Munich Security Conference.

Both personalities stated that Russia, as one of the nuclear powers, was appalled by the ongoing, worrisome, deterioration of the NPT regime. Minister Lavrov claimed that the former nuclear goals for nuclear weapons eradication were being replaced by a populist ideology that advocated the so-called 'nuclear zero' (U.N GAOR/Russia 2016, 41). This was in addition to the statements from Prime Minister Medvedev, in line with Foreign Minister Lavrov's intervention. The former stated that Russia was truly concerned with the then status of the culture of arms control and with new concerning tendencies on the rise. In the words of Prime Minister Medvedev, the international community had lost its "culture of mutual arms control", an element deemed pivotal for the fostering of a trusting and more cooperative environment amongst the international community (Medvedev 2016).

Manifestation of the concern by Russia by the recent status of the NPT regime as a whole and its relationship with the US in particular become central to Russia's role, especially the bilateral relationship between the two nuclear powers, becomes a recurrent theme in Russia's representatives statements.

However, the year of 2017 is relevant due to the entrenchment of this message of concern, made once more by Foreign Minister Lavrov, both at the UNGA meeting and at Munich Security Conference (MSC) of 2017. By entrenchment is understood to be the level of commitment demonstrated by Russia regarding the survival of the NPT regime, more specifically, the achievement of the status of a "nuclear-weapon-free-world" (U.N GAOR/Russia 2017, 26). At the MSC event, the same entity advocated that the status of the relationship between the two nuclear superpowers was in dire need of a reset, reverting to a state of "pragmatism, mutual respect, and understanding" concerning their unique responsibility concerning international security (Lavrov 2017).

The concept of 'concern' becomes critical in Russia's relation with the US, and one that permeates all of the concepts that compose the category in question ('special responsibility'). It is also

present in Russia's criticism addressed at the US in regards to nuclear matters as well as its stance toward international treaties.

This being said, the connection between the concept of concern and one of criticism that Russia has created in regard to the US in recent years deepens, thus making a distinction between those same concepts harder to highlight. Therefore the following information, corresponding to the remainder of the years under analysis (2018, 2019, 2020) will demonstrate this very same interconnectivity between the aforementioned elements, leading to the construction of a particular conclusion for the entire category.

The year 2018, by now proved to be an essential year for this investigation, consistently gives examples of both concepts ('Concerned Nuclear Power' and 'Critical of the US'). Both are present in the Federal Address of President Putin, the intervention through which the president alludes to the disastrous state of affairs of the nuclear regime (Putin 2018a).

The issue of shifting the nuclear threshold is regarded as very problematic, one that ultimately unsettles the international environment, possibly leading to scenarios of confrontations, even at lower levels (regional contexts, for example, marked by the eventual use of low-yield nuclear weapons) (Putin 2018b). This is perceived by Russia as the result of US initiatives in the development of new types of weapons that are not under the provisions of any arms control treaty (Putin 2018a; Defense Ministry 2018).

In association to this panorama, the mistakes referenced by President Putin are in direct connection to the blunder of executive decisions, made by the US over the year of 2018, emphasizing the US' withdrawal process from the INF Treaty, in August of the same year (Defense Ministry 2018).

The process of withdrawal of the US from the INF is the basis for the information relative to the years of 2019 and 2020. This is so due to the rhetoric presented by Russia, at the UNGA meeting of 2019, as well as, by President Putin in his Federal Address. In both instances, the issue of concern regarding the frailing status of the nuclear arms control situation is only enhanced (the withdrawal process by the US from the INF Treaty at this stage is already a consummated fact) by the statements given by Foreign Minister Lavrov (at the UNGA meeting).

In his own words,

"(*t)remendous damage has been done to the decades old system of global strategic stability by the actions of the United States, which, after withdrawing from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, has now destroyed the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, with the obedient support of every member of*

NATO. Now the future of the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) is in question. On top of that, the United States refuses to ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty and has lowered the threshold in its doctrinal documents for the use of nuclear weapons" (U.N. GAOR/Russia 2019, 51).

The tone infused in the above quote is a good example to showcase both concepts at stake. It also demonstrates the shift in rhetoric that Russia employs regarding the US, going from the theme of "our partners" to one of near ostracization, through the constant reminding of US actions concerning the international nuclear regime (ABM Treaty collapse and the INF Treaty withdrawal) (U.N. GAOR/Russia 2019, 51; Putin 2019).

Consequently, the last chronological element that must be introduced is the year 2020, although this last element does not deviate from the previous record, therefore one may incur in the situation of repetition. One can identify an increasing sentiment of concern towards the looming end of the New START Treaty and to the denial of cooperation and openness from the US regarding Russian initiatives to engage in negotiations that can lead to the extension of the mentioned treaty (Putin 2020; U.N. GAOR/Russia 2020, 50; Lavrov 2020).

Classifying 'special responsibility' category according to the proposed set of roles (ideal types)

The analysed concepts allow to formulate the following conclusions within the 'special responsibility' category considering the ideal types developed in the present thesis (RNP and NSP).

Generally, by presenting a revised nuclear image, with an inclination towards the collective good and international stability, Russia aims at balancing the facet of aggressiveness and confrontation in its role projection. In this sense, Russia's role projection has been underpinned by the 'special responsibility' category. The latter category has connected Russia's nuclear capacity with the unique set of duties that being nuclear power entails. Such Russia's position fits well under the banner of a RNP role, according to which Russia is a responsible actor within the international community, and ends up benefiting from it, in economic and political realms.

Nonetheless, Russia, within this same category, has been also capable of demonstrating that if, and any, type of problematic situation arises, Russia is capable of shifting the responsibility to other actors, eventually exempting itself from any possible fallout as in the case of the collapse of the INF Treaty. This particular facet of Russia's role moves Russia's closer to a NSP actor, even within the category of 'special responsibility'. In this sense, the current section faces the same difficulty as in the

section relative to the 'technological exceptionalism' category, in what concerns the objective of distinguishing the dominant nuclear role of Russia.

Nevertheless, one can conclude that, concerning the 'special responsibility' category, Russia demonstrates a predisposition to align itself with a position emphasising collective action, under the banner of a RNP actor. This approach is associated with Russia's aspiration to improve its positioning among its international peers, towards acquiring more influence in international politics.

Table 2 – Russia's nuclear role and the associated categories

Role codes	RNP	NSP
Definition	Emphasis on the international commitment; Nuclear reduction is a concern; The international regimes, such as the NPT one are as important as nuclear strategy/arsenals; Collective good is above individual goals.	Nuclear superiority is regarded as pivotal, even mitigating international arrangements such as the NPT; Prioritization the "Self" is a defining trait; Maintenance of the state's security is essential
Description	**Russia's 'special responsibility'** • *'open for' dialogue'* (nuclear initiatives, peaceful cooperation, transparency, policy maker) • *'defender of the international regime'* (shared responsibility, 'strategic parity') 'treaties must be kept alive', global peace and security, 'nuclear-weapon-free-world' • *'concerned nuclear power'* ('nuclear concern' 'treaties must be kept alive', 'strategic parity') • '*critical of US'* (nuclear concern, 'nuclear treaties must be kept alive', collective/multilateral efforts are a crucial element, shared responsibility - pointing at the US)	**Technological Exceptionalism** • *'not a bluff'* (nuclear strength, nuclear modernization, cutting edge and larger number of weapons, technological innovation) • '*strategic parity'* (survival of the state, sovereignty, technological innovation, power, redefinition of the rules of engagement, nuclear modernization) • '*soviet legacy'* ('not catching up with anyone', exceptionalism, power, nuclear strength as centrality after the collapse of the USSR)

Source: summary of the author

4.1. US and nuclear non-proliferation and arms control regime: identifying the range of role variation

4.1.1. US as a nuclear role state: Presidential Nuclear Initiatives and JCPOA (2015)

To analyze the variance in a role, the current investigation elected the "Presidential Nuclear Initiatives" - PNIs. Dating back to the early 1990s, the PNIs were a special set of practical achievements and compromises that both superpowers of the Cold War enacted. Despite the nature of the PNIs being one very distinct from the one of a formal agreement, the PNIs, due to their more flexible nature allowed for the accomplishment of significant reductions in terms of nuclear arsenals, as well as increase tendencies of non-proliferation (Sokov 2018). In other words, the existence of the PNIs allowed for the strengthening of the NPT regime and of the relationship of the two nuclear superpowers at a time of escalating tensions.

In conjunction with this flexibility, the PNIs had yet another unique particularity: these efforts were of unilateral nature and bestowed upon the parties involved a sense of reciprocity, creating a scenario where the actions of one of the entities would generated a response in equal measure (Koch 2018; Arms Control Association 2017). The PNIs were two separate unilateral actions performed by the USA and closely followed by its geopolitical counterpart, the currently extinct USSR. The first of these events took place on 27th September 1991, under the George Bush administration and was set with the central objective of drastically reducing the number of strategic nuclear weapons (Kock 2018).

As it can be perceived, the US in this instance was the frontrunner and setter of the tone for possible discussions concerning nuclear issues. By enacting unilaterally and presenting its actions in a good faith fashion, the Bush administration had hoped of inducing a similar response by their opposite, the then Communist Party, led by Mikhail Gorbachev (Koch 2018; Sokov 2018).

To this end, the US initiated a set of measures with the goal of altering the functioning of its nuclear apparatus, leading to an eventual reduction of their importance for national security. Among the actions carried out by the Bush administration, some are especially relevant to the goal of a real reduction of tactical nuclear weapons (TNWs). To begin with, the US stipulated the recall and elimination of all ground-launched TNWs, as well as their removal from surface ships, attack submarines, and from land-based naval aircraft (Koch 2018; Sokov 2018; Arms Control Association 2017). The US would also proceed with the destruction of around 400 nuclear artillery warheads, and

also to eliminate a significant number of “Lance” surface-to-surface missile warheads from its stockpiles (Koch 2018).

Concerning other nuclear ventures pursued by the US at the time, such as development of new types of cruise missiles and Intercontinental Ballistic Missile programs, the first PNI put an end to such endeavors, in an attempt to appease the Soviet Union (Koch 2018).

All of these measures represented serious advancements for the global objective of nuclear elimination, embodied by the NPT regime itself, while simultaneously allowing the US to present itself as a true patron of the very same regime. This is the case of “leading by example” and demonstration to the international community that the notion of security perpetually hinged on a logic of nuclear deterrence and possible nuclear arms race was a mistake and that other venues were indeed feasible and could produce more practical outcomes (Koch 2018).

Nonetheless, however positive these efforts, one needs to keep in mind the already stated nature of these initiatives. They resulted from the unilateral labors devised by the US establishment and were supported by the belief that the USSR would indeed act in reciprocity. Such an outcome was possible due to the manifestation of a specific set of geopolitical factors, namely the internal dynamics that characterized the Soviet regime during the regarded timetable (Sokov 2018; Koch 2018).

Furthermore, reinforcing this nuclear role status of the US, the Bush administration also formulated a set of recommendations for the Soviet Union to apply to its own nuclear arsenals and nuclear industry. In their nature, these propositions were similar to the ones implemented by the US administration, with special focus given to the topic of reducing Multiple Independently Targetable Reentry Vehicles (MIRV) technology (Koch 2018).

The second round of PNIs took place on 28th January 1992, being once more initiated by the US and followed the same format of the previous PNI, this time, centred on the objective of reducing strategic nuclear forces (the operating nuclear triad and their supporting components) (Koch 2018).

By consequence, the US applied specific regulatory actions on its nuclear legs, effectively reducing its arsenal. Some of those measures were the capping of the number of produced bombers, namely the B-2 bomber, to a maximum of 20 units in the entire Air Force branch. Another resolution was the cessation of producing new warheads type W-88 for SLBMs (Koch 2018; Arms Control Association 2017). The issue of MIRV technology (introduced with the previous PNI) was again brought to the table in an effort of pursuing real de-escalation while attempting to create a more predictable behaviour by the US and the USSR..

Maintaining the reciprocal aspect developed with the previous presidential initiative, the Russian Federation (the successor of the USSR) pledged itself to uphold the previous stipulated commitments of the first PNI, as well as implement a new series of reductions and regulatory measures, aimed to tackle its large nuclear arsenal.

In sum, the existence of both PNIs allowed to demonstrate the depth of the US' commitment toward the Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Arms Control regime, by revealing its focus in being a nuclear role state and driven by the objective of achieving the defining lines of the Non-Proliferation Treaty´s text, namely the elimination of nuclear arsenals from the international system (Koch 2018).

The JCPOA (2015)

The other cited example in this section concerning the construction of the US as a nuclear role entity is the "Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action", commonly called the JCPOA or the "Iran Deal" (Mousavian and Mousavian 2018; Cronberg 2017; Shirvani and Vukovic 2018). Synthesizing the long and complex negotiable process, which involved Iran and the permanent members of the UNSC - the five recognized nuclear states by the NPT - and also Germany, in a P5+1 format, from 2006 onward (Osiewicz 2018; Fitzpatrick 2017).

This accord, in which the US participated and, to a certain degree, proved to be an entity that would allow for its conclusion, can be used to construct the concept of the US as a nuclear role. This is possible mainly for two reasons: first of all, due to the timeframe in which the deal was struck, specifically the year 2015, the first year of the timetable used in this investigation. Because of this factor, this example is noteworthy since it can be interpreted as a stepping stone for the future analysis contained in this paper.

Secondly, the sole existence of this agreement proved to be a massive strengthening point for the NPT regime, due to the fact that one of its key members - the US - played an essential role in paving the way to the creation of concrete action concerning non-proliferation efforts while at the same time demonstrating the true value of employing diplomatic instruments rather than coercive ones (such as snapback sanctions or military operations) in achieving real progress concerning nuclear non-proliferation (Mousavian and Mousavian 2018; Cronberg 2017; Osiewicz 2018).

This entire process lasted twelve years, having been started during 2003. During this period of negotiations, and breakdown of them as well, the relationship between the US and Iran was very volatile (Mousavian and Mousavian 2018). However, due to the manifestation of both internal factors in

Iran and in the US establishment - in this period led by the Obama administration - the normalization of this relationship became possible.

The year 2013 is crucial, mainly because of the presidential elections in Iran that allowed for the rise to power of a moderate, Hassan Rouhani, and a rapprochement with the US (Osiewicz 2018). At the same time, a shift in foreign policy took place within the US establishment, departing from the coercive rhetoric and crippling sanctions to a more pragmatic stance, defending the concept of "no-bomb policy" instead of the previous "no-enrichment policy" (Mousavian and Mousavian 2018). This change played a pivotal role in paving the way to a real agreement, eventually concluded on the 14th July, 2015 (Security Council resolution 2015/547).

In essence this example of the JCPOA helps to highlight the significance of the US in being a nuclear role state within the nuclear regime, while demonstrating how it is possible to curb possible proliferation outbreaks and promote the eradication of nuclear weapons from the international system.

However, despite the positive record that this example sets in terms of nuclear policy, one should keep in mind that the analysis of US positioning will be necessarily different from the other case study, namely Russia, due to the change of administrations and the ensuing implications for the US nuclear policy.

4.1.2. US as a nuclear ego state: Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty (ABM Treaty)

Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty

To ascertain the nuclear ego dimension in US role, the present sub-section focuses on the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty - commonly referred as ABM Treaty - and US position towards the JCPOA in the time frame 2001 to 2018.

The ABM Treaty was one of the longest treaties to be in force concerning the issue of nuclear non-proliferation and arms control. Established on 26th May, 1972, between the US and USSR, it endured and was upheld for a period of nearly thirty years. The treaty survived the collapse of the USSR and remained one of the most significant regulations concerning the avoidance of nuclear escalations and imposing ceilings on key types of technologies to both of the parties (Rusten 2010).

In order to understand how such an important element of nuclear non-proliferation and arms control came to be eliminated, without being replaced, one must first present the essence of the treaty, which corresponded to barriers and legal prohibitions for both parties from ever developing and deploying, at a national level, any sort of defense system against long-range ballistic missiles (Rusten

2010). The logic behind the treaty´s conception was the maintenance of the "MAD doctrine" (initiated in the 1960s) from collapsing. In other words, the ABM Treaty was a necessary tool to keep the logic of nuclear deterrence alive and to avoid endless nuclear arm races between both countries, with the ultimate goal of avoiding a nuclear conflict.

With that being said, the ABM Treaty did not mention any type of restriction regarding the development and deployment of countermeasures against short- to medium-range ballistic missiles (Rusten 2010). In hindsight, the ABM Treaty indeed allowed for serious reductions of nuclear arsenals of the countries concerned to take place, thus contributing positively to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Arms Control regime.

The connection between the ABM and US ego dimension of its role results from a particular geopolitical environment, as well as the internal policies and scenarios that molded the US prior to the extinction of the treaty in question. To elucidate how volatile the internal political scenario lived in the US at the time in analysis was, one can analyze a statement made by the then in office US President George W. Bush:

"*We need new concepts of deterrence that rely on both offensive and defensive forces. Deterrence can no longer be based solely on the threat of nuclear retaliation. Defenses can strengthen deterrence by reducing the incentive for proliferation. We need a new framework that allows us to build missile defenses to counter the different threats of today's world. To do so, we must move beyond the constraints of the 30-year old ABM Treaty*" (George W. Bush, 2001: National Defense University speech *apud* Rusten 2010, 1).

Immediately, it is possible to highlight one aspect from such a statement: the level of authority from which it originates (presidential level) leaves no room for doubt that a shift in terms of national and foreign policy took place within the US establishment. The importance of such declaration is also crucial for the structuring of the concept of nuclear ego role, in the sense that demonstrates, in first hand, the US implementing behavioural tendencies of what can be designated as a nuclear ego state.

This ego dimension of the role is further more evident when compared with the role previously presented and analysed in the above sub-section, which used the PNIs as the building example to establish the US as a nuclear role state. These words, by US President George W. Bush, demonstrate a new rhetoric, starkly contrasting with the policies of the former administration, being this new executive driven by a willingness to assert the so-called American exceptionalism and redefine the rules of

engagement within the international sphere, while eliminating any agreement or legally binding document that could interfere with achieving those national goals (Rusten 2010)

Despite the tone of the statement, in reality the dissolution of the ABM Treaty could have been a long and slow process, since it would have required diplomatic channels, meetings, management of expectations and implementation of measures that would satisfy all the parties involved. However, the geopolitical context surrounding the ABM Treaty proved to be the most defining factor for its demise. The 9/11 terrorist attacks on US soil were those geopolitical factors that accelerated the collapse of the ABM Treaty (Rusten 2010).

The occurrence of these attacks at the center of the US establishment had profound consequences for both at the global and internal levels. Such events only came to bolster the tendency for unilateralism and disruptive behaviour towards international regimes, traits that would become synonymous with characterizing George W. Bush's administration (Rusten 2010).

Once more, the use of Presidential quotes helps to clarify the connection between the increasing disdain for legal agreements and the fate of the ABM Treaty in the process of establishing the US as a nuclear ego state. Again, President George W. Bush, when describing the ABM Treaty did so using terms as "outdated" and "dangerous", while in the same statement President Bush demonstrated his true goal: elimination of binding agreements - through the building pressure imposed over its presidential counterpart, Vladimir Putin, by stating that both countries needed to "move beyond the accord" (Rusten 2010; Bush 2001).

These statements allow for another conclusion to be drawn: the shift in perspective by the US establishment towards the nuclear topic was radical, when compared to the shining example of PNIs (that represented a pivotal contribution to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Arms Control regime despite their unilateral nature). Eventually, the US went from being a pivotal entity for the strengthening of the nuclear regime to one of its more damaging and destabilizing members (Rusten 2010).

This endangerment of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Arms Control regime is demonstrated with the successive signals of withdrawal given by the US, in an attempt to eliminate the ABM Treaty effectively, in the months that followed the 9/11 events. At the same time that these actions were made by the US, Russia was showing signs of readiness and predisposition to work with its counterpart in order not to scrap the treaty, but to perform any amendment or change that would be deemed necessary to keep the agreement viable (Rusten 2010).

However, despite these efforts made by Russia, the US President and some of the highest official members of the administration[14] showed an unwavering commitment to the topic of disregarding completely the treaty, no matter the strategic costs associated (Rusten 2010).

The real costs of such a position became clear on 13th December, 2001, the day when the Bush administration officially announced its intention of withdrawing from the ABM Treaty, and thus initiating the six-month period required by the treaty for a member to withdraw (Rusten 2010). This outcome has been even more damaging since the US disregarded the Russian efforts for redefining the treaty (Rusten 2010). These actions would prove to be the starting point for the souring of the US-Russia relationship for years to come.

Moreover, through this official announcement, the ABM Treaty which to this point was in existence for almost thirty-years came to be extinct, leaving in its behalf a vacuum in terms of nuclear regulation that to this day is still a source of contestation between the very same countries that once were partners under this treaty (Rusten 2010). In other words, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Arms Control regime became poorer, being supported by one less treaty and now having to deal with the precedent of withdrawal, by a nuclear power, of any agreement at any given moment. All of this was underpinned by the US aspiration to safeguard the national interests at the cost of maintaining strategic stability with other nuclear entities, specifically with Russia.

4.2. Analysing US nuclear roles (2015-2020)

4.2.1. Unveiling the pillars in the US nuclear stance: Modernization and NPT

Through the analysis of the nuclear policies of both administrations that are in power during the selected timeframe - the Obama and Trump administrations - it becomes possible to ascertain an opposition and a contrasting rhetoric towards the nuclear weapons: on the one hand, the approach towards the NPT and its pivotal importance for the achievement of the quasi-universal goal of eliminating nuclear arsenals; on the other hand, the theme of nuclear modernization.

As for the former, its main pillars correspond to an array of agreements, such as the INF Treaty or the more recent New START Treaty, which despite their bilateral nature are perceived as important building blocks to support the previous stated goal of elimination (therefore, in the US role, there is an association of these important treaties with the RNP role). NPT tends to be heavily

[14] Vice President Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld - Secretary of Defense, John Bolton - Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security, Robert Joseph - National Security Council Senior Director for Proliferation Strategy, Counterproliferation and Homeland Defense (Rusten 2010)

associated with the Obama administration from 2009 onwards. Although the time frame of the present analysis is restricted to a five-year period of which only two years concern this administration, we keep in mind that the events that took place during those two years represent a culmination of a myriad of processes and efforts that were constructed throughout the previous eight-year period of the Obama administration. This being said, the two-year period allows for the analysis of the importance of the NPT in the US nuclear role under the Obama administration.

As for the latter, the theme of nuclear modernization presents itself as the other key issue that emerges from the analysis, in both Obama and Trump administrations, with the latter revealing a different intake of such concepts into the US nuclear role, radically different from the one implemented by the Obama administration.

'Modernization' and 'NPT' have a special relationship since they are, at their core, their own antagonists. The elimination of nuclear weapons is one of the main reasons for the NPT to exist in the first place and such a goal is the absolute antithesis of any nuclear weapons modernization process. This is so because as long as nuclear weapons are kept functional and in service the goal of their eradication cannot be attained, hence the NPT regime will continue to fail to fulfill its reason for existence. However, within the US establishment, the recurrence to the 'modernization' and 'NPT' changes over time, something that is connected to the character of the administration in office at a particular time.

4.2.2.1. US role conception under Obama's administration:

'Unique (shared) Responsibility'

The Obama executive, in the period in question, was in its final two years in office, thus ending its presidential rule of eight years. In these final two years, which correspond to the years of 2015 and 2016, the Obama administration made significant strides when debating nuclear issues, specifically through the creation and implementation of international agreements.

The JCPOA is the prime example of such efforts, which culminated with the prevention of another country (Iran) from acquiring nuclear warfare capabilities. Another example is the steps to enhance the fulfillment of the New START Treaty, a bilateral agreement established between the two key nuclear players of the international system, both case studies in this investigation.

Nonetheless, despite these examples demonstrating that this two-year gap was significant in nuclear matters, the results achieved by the Obama administration during this phase have their roots in

an earlier era, related to the first presidential mandate of the same executive. Therefore a brief presentation of the efforts achieved by the Obama administration is required.

This first period of the Obama administration (which is not the point of focus of this section) is pivotal for the assertion of the dominant category within the above defined themes that are heavily present in the US case (modernization and NPT). In this sub-section, as its title suggests, the end goal is to allow for the current investigation to reach an important stage in its formation: the presentation of the thought process that leads to the construction of the RNP role, associated with the US.

This category in question is one of pillars that support the RNP role and it manifests itself through what this dissertation designated as 'unique responsibility'. This concept is particular to the administration under analysis - the Obama administration – something much owed to the efforts, rhetoric and achievements of the respective eight-year period of the administration in office.

The construction of this category ('unique responsibility'), corresponds to two main concepts: 'moral obligation' and one of the key foreign policy points of the Obama administration, the notion of 'global zero'. Both of these concepts are deeply intertwined.

'Global Zero'/ 'Moral Obligation'

During the year of 2009, the recently elected President Barack H. Obama received a nomination for the Peace Nobel Prize, which he eventually won. The importance of the reference of such an event for the ongoing investigation comes down to the nature of the message and political goals that were set by the address of President Obama to the Nobel Peace Prize committee. In his address, President Obama defended the entrenchment of the use of multilateral processes coupled with the reinforcement of the centrality of certain international organizations, epitomized by the United Nations, considered the universal organization within the international system. Such rhetoric demonstrated the will of the Obama administration in achieving meaningful results for the improvement of the security and peace of the international system (Obama 2009a).

This lecture was also the platform for the presentation of one key foreign policy goal of this new administration: the eradication of nuclear arsenals from the international community and the simultaneous strengthening of non-proliferation tendencies (Obama 2009a). The entire political goal of this address can be epitomized in President Obama´s own words: "(...) stopping the spread of nuclear weapons and seeking a world without them" (Obama 2016a). The speech performed at Oslo comes as another demonstration of the new direction that the US establishment was willing to pursue.

This foreign policy topic of nuclear elimination can be designated as “global zero”, a concept introduced by President Obama in his speech in Prague, during the same year of his Nobel Peace Prize nomination (Obama 2009b).This concept is fundamental when analysing the documentation portraying the year of 2015.

The importance of the JCPOA cannot be overstated since it demonstrated that multilateral efforts can bear fruition as well as proving that real results in matters of security and regulation can be created, thus ensuring a more peaceful and stable international environment (Osiewicz 2018, 152).

Also worthy of mention is the fact that by stating the JCPOA example at such a high level meeting as the UNGA, the Obama administration revealed the level of its commitment to the international cause of nuclear elimination, more specifically an alignment with the policy and action of the NPT regime as a whole, thus aiding in strengthening said regime in the process.

In other words, this address at the United Nations demonstrated the manifestation of years of the Obama nuclear policy in action, one that aims at fostering responsibility and full commitment to the goals of the NPT, while at the same time creating, for the US, a solid role of leadership and responsibility in the nuclear field.

In association to this fact is the presidential intervention at the UNGA meeting (2016) of this year as the prime example for the manifestation of the concept of “unique responsibility” (U.N. GAOR/US 2016, 18). In his address, President Obama made the argument that nuclear armed countries, namely the US, have a distinct duty of leading any efforts that concerns the elimination of nuclear arsenals from within the international regime.

Such concept of responsibility, coupled with the US nuclear record, sustained the political goal, long developed by the Obama administration: the idea of nuclear arsenals viewed as detrimental to security and geostrategic purposes as a long overdue issue that must be tackled at once, in order to ensure a more stable international environment.

Here the political standing of the US goes hand-in-hand with the entire NPT, especially with the pillars of non-proliferation and disarmament. In other words, US positioning boosted the validity of action of the NPT regime by creating pressure on the nuclear weapon states, and all possible candidates of acquiring that type of weapon, that in order to be an accepted member of the international community, the ownership of nuclear arsenals must be abdicated, thus fostering more equal relationships among countries.

During his last year in office, President Obama strengthened his pledge for nuclear elimination and consolidation of the nuclear regulatory regime. Examples of such instances are President Obama’s

speech on March 30, 2016 and the address at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial, in May of the same year. First of all, this last point of consolidating the NPT regime was once more brought into discussion with the remarks made by President Obama on March 30, 2016, through the success of the JCPOA in achieving both previous points (disarmament and non-proliferation). Hence, this undeniably important agreement became one of the key documents, in recent times, for the NPT regime and for the global fight against weaponization of nuclear technology.

At the same address, President Obama also made the point of how inadequate nuclear arsenals of the superpowers of the Cold War were since they were not adjusted to the security and geopolitical needs of current times. This statement reveals that the US was fully committed to the goal of disarmament, and such behaviour was demonstrated by further reductions of its arsenal according to the New START Treaty (Obama 2016a).

President Obama's approach revealed the importance of the concept of "moral obligation", upheld by the US establishment due to its unique use of nuclear weapons[15] (Obama 2016b). Another instance revealing the centrality of the "moral obligation" is the speech given by President Obama at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial, in May 2016.

This latter intervention is pivotal because with it, President Obama brought up another detrimental concept: the one of "moral revolution". Throughout the speech, President Obama made clear that in order to fully achieve the idea of "global zero" there must be a moral revolution of the concepts and norms that surround nuclear weapons (Obama 2016b).

This idea falls into the specific characterization created by the ongoing investigation, the one of "responsible nuclear power". Ergo, when President Obama made such a plea, what in reality took place was a commitment to support the debate concerning nuclear arsenals because the element of human cost was brought up to the center stage (Obama 2016b).

This political strategy resided in a revitalization of the concept of "shared responsibility" a seminal idea in the conception of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Arms Control regime itself, in which the US would act by example and lead the international community to enforce the goal of nuclear weapons eradication.

This can be epitomized by the words of President Obama, which convey the idea that the responsibility and courage of setting an example befalls the nuclear weapon states, specifically the US (Obama 2016b). With such a statement, the role enacted by the US is one of full responsibility and

[15] A small but very important fact must be stated: the US, under President Obama perceives itself as the leader in efforts of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament due to its historical record. The US is the only country to have used nuclear weapons against another country and directly against human targets. Therefore, the image of responsibility and rightful duty is one that is strongly pursued by the Obama executive during its period in office (Obama 2016b).

leadership through which the US aims to create an image of righteous actor and of being the prime example of how an international actor should act concerning nuclear issues. In other words, the US can be portrayed as playing the role of a Responsible Nuclear Power, or RNP state.

What President Obama highlighted, besides this overall desire by the US of being perceived as a RNP actor, was that such a task of elimination and strengthening is a long and consuming process, dependent on the occurrence of deep changes at the perception level in regards to what is and what is not considered a security threat.

Following President Obama´s logic, in order to achieve a scenario where nuclear weapons are no longer deemed necessary, a profound shift in terms of what is conceived to be deterrence must take place. What is advocated here is the rejection of the "logic of deterrence as a fatalism" (Obama 2009b), thus allowing for new security conjectures to be created, not dependent on the existence of nuclear arsenals.

The analysis of the last two years in office of the Obama administration, allows for the following conclusion to be drawn: under this executive, the US came to be deeply associated with the endless efforts to establish new methods of achieving the Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Arms Control regime's goals, and of enacting one of the central US foreign policy concepts, the one of reaching the 'global zero'. This firmly establishes the US role as a RNP actor, corresponding to the categorization developed in this dissertation.

Classifying US position under the Obama's administration according to the proposed set of roles

With the establishment of the role of the US as a RNP actor under the Obama administration and apparent positive influence on the Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Arms Control regime, modernization of nuclear arsenals seems to appear as a metaphorical stain on the US record as a RNP. Although President Obama created the narrative that supports the stipulation of the US as a RNP actor, the same administration also committed itself to the renewal and modernization of the US nuclear triad, thus to some extent contradicting itself in matters of disarmament and pursuit of a world without this type of weapons as a RNP.

Such commitment to the extension of the life service of the US nuclear arsenal is a clear example of how the projected "global zero" and fulfillment of the so-called "unique responsibility" can be contradicting.

While a significant reduction (in quantitative and qualitative terms) of nuclear weapons did take place under the Obama administration, mainly due to the restrictions imposed by the New START

Treaty, such reduction, taking into account the existence of initiatives such the already mentioned PNIs in the 1990, is insufficient for a RNP aspiring for a fundamental policy-shift regarding nuclear topics.

One of the results of the modernization process carried out by the Obama administration was a pragmatic way of performing a concentration of the US nuclear arsenal while adhering to the status quo. Simultaneously, it allowed for the creation of an enduring doubt connected to the degree of commitment upheld by the US establishment toward the elimination of nuclear weapons.

Thus, the following point can be formulated: while generally, the US demonstrated full commitment to the eradication of nuclear arsenals, this commitment needed to be balanced against the idea of modernization of nuclear weapons, also central to the US nuclear role. In this setting, the US crafted for itself a role of being an entity in favor of restructuring and deep changes concerning nuclear technology, presenting the image of responsibility and leadership, mainly acting through setting the example.

4.2.2.2. US nuclear role conception during the Trump administration:

Modernization

Being the RNP role presented with the documentation of 2015 and 2016 associated made, that supported the role attributed to the US during those years, it is necessary to introduce the counterpart of this role. Aided by the table constructed through the analytical process of the literature selected, a pattern is established between national policies and actions executed by the Trump administration and the theme of nuclear weapons, at international levels. This pattern will be presented in the current sub-section that follows.

'America first' / 'Unmatched Power'

To begin with, a change of administrations always has associated variations when regarding to foreign policy, specifically when the topic of national security is involved. In the case of the US, this transitional process in the form of a presidential election, created profound ripples to its foreign policy, in multiple areas, with particular significance to the nuclear topic.

The consequences of the actions enacted by the new administration in office, the Trump administration, are visible in one of the first official addresses made by President Trump, namely the United Nations General Assembly address, which took place on September 19, 2017. During his address, President Trump presented to the international community a scenario of radical change, since

it revealed how deep the rift between the past Obama administration and the new Trump administration foreign policy rationale was.

That rift had particular effects on the stability and core strength of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Arms Control regime as a whole due to the type of rhetoric introduced by President Trump that came to define the US establishment when the topic of discussion was nuclear arsenals.

In his address to the General Assembly, President Trump started to develop a new role for the US toward nuclear weapons, a role that would be based upon the heavy investment on the development and research of new types of nuclear weapons, an enormous investment in the armed forces, specifically in the nuclear ones through the finance of various modernization programs and the new stance adopted by the US regarding some of the international commitments related to nuclear regulation (U.N. GAOR/US 2017, 12).

In line with this address are some other official declarations made by President Trump right at the beginning of his mandate. On the January 27, 2017, President Trump officially approved a presidential memorandum on the need for the "rebuilding of the US Armed Forces" (Trump 2017a).

This point alludes specifically to the new necessity of the US to reassert its military dominance at the global level, with the prospect of guaranteeing US influence and relevance at any key decision-making process that could take place. The new characterization of the US nuclear arsenal stated in this document is as follows: "modern, robust, flexible, resilient, ready and appropriately tailored to deter the 21st century threats and reassure our allies and partners" (Trump 2017a, section 3).

The role of stability, enforcement of reduction tendencies and abiding to international agreements was quickly relinquished and gradually replaced by one that is supported by aggressive rhetoric (and likewise the implementation of equally aggressive national policies) and one that would disregard any sort of regime or partnership that might jeopardize the US interests at the global stage (White House, National Security Strategy).

This new role, soon to be adopted by the US establishment, can be said to be of egocentric nature, (a derivative from the nuclear ego state role concept earlier introduced in this investigation), in the sense that above all else, the individual (or national in this case) interests were viewed as always surpassing the collective ones, no matter the cost of such course of action.

Still concerning the year of 2017, there is yet another example that reveals the level of commitment of the Trump administration to this new role that is being developed. Such an example is the "National Security Strategy" (NSS) of December 2017. In broad terms, the scenario that the Trump administration presents through its new NSS is one of imminent danger from the outside; danger to US

power and interests. Such events have instigated a need for reform and reimposition of strength, American strength. Contrasting with the rhetoric of the RNP role, this new role - the NSP role - has at its core the mission of the US reacquiring its global status of absolute international power-house, in all domains (Trump 2017b)[16].

The NSS also introduces what can be understood as one of the mottos of the Trump administration: according to perception of this new executive, the international environment is so nefarious toward US interests that the US is being forced to act in order to preserve its geostrategic and geopolitical goals abroad (White House, National Security Strategy). The fact that such a political and rhetorical positioning is made by the US establishment already functions as yet another proof of how dissimilar the previous nuclear role presented - RNP- is from this new nuclear role that is being created - the NSP.

Regarding the year of 2018, it is during this year that the role of the US being a NSP actor becomes fully developed and comes to characterize US' actions when the topic at hand is of nuclear nature. To demonstrate this radical role change, the analysis of the State of the Union Address of President Trump on January 30, 2018, proves to be crucial.

In his state address, President Trump expresses how pivotal the US' nuclear arsenal still is in today's world, despite the international community rallying together in defense for the eradication of those types of weapons (Trump 2018a). With these remarks, President Trump consolidates the new role of the US toward the nuclear theme, since what is highlighted is the detrimental necessity of keeping the US secure, stating that its national security is above any international commitment that the US might have at any given moment (Trump 2018a).

In other words, this official statement by the US President exemplifies how the notion of multilateralism and collective goals no longer matter, being surpassed by the need to satisfy the national interest (White House, National Security Strategy). Such actions have a cost, that being the weakening of the entire Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Arms Control regime by one of its core elements, the US.

This fragility of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Arms Control regime, which is enhanced by this new behavioural trend of the US, is stark when compared to the previous role enacted by the same entity. The US shifted from being one of the frontrunners for the regulation and long-standing goal of nuclear weapons eradication to one of the international actors that adamantly defends the existence of

[16] Analysing the text of the NSS with more detail, one aspect becomes evident and it is connected to the type of stance that is reintroduced by the Trump administration in regard to what are understood to be the strategic threats. The rhetoric used is one close to the one of the Cold War, with the application of a specific classification to its threats For example, Russia and China are perceived as "revisionist powers" while Iran is continuously regarded as a "rogue state" (White House, *National Security Strategy*).

nuclear arsenals, regarding them as a crucial element for the guarantee of international peace and stability, but more important, the ultimate tool to maintain a functional nuclear deterrence at play (White House, National Security Strategy).

Hence, this document (2018 State of the Union address) is a good example to showcase the radical transition from one end of the scale - being a designated RNP actor - to the other - a self-centered nuclear player, classified as a NSP actor.

Still concerning the year of 2018 and the construction of the NSP role, there is another international episode with deep ramifications to the NPT regime that has the US at its center. The event in question is the withdrawal process of the US from the JCPOA agreement, in May 2018 (Trump 2018b).

As already stated in this paper, the JCPOA by itself had huge implications that directly concerned nuclear regulation and non-proliferation tendencies as well as becoming a shining example of international cooperation at the highest level. The Trump administration took the executive decision to remove the US from this arrangement, by trotting out unchecked data related to violations committed by the Iranian regime under the JCPOA acting (Trump 2018b, 2018c).

In contrast to the US position under the Obama administration (2015-2016) that focused on strengthening multilateral tendencies and advocating eradication of nuclear arsenals from the international system (Obama 2009b, 2016b), the US approach under the Trump administration (2017-2019) advocated a rhetoric of moving the US closer to the approach adopted by the George W. Bush's administration, and the ensuing backing of unilateral tendencies, disregard for international agreements and the aspiration for the US to profile as the uncontested leader.

Under the Trump administration, the JCPOA, which acquires its negative characterization as the "worst deals ever" in the US history (Fitzpatrick 2017; Strategic Comments 2018) became an instrument of pressure for regime change in Iran and show of allegiance by US partners to the new oncoming administration (Fitzpatrick 2018; Cronberg 2017)[17]. It also became one of the means through which the new political perspective of the US establishment - no interest in fulfilling international commitments - was implemented to its full extent by shifting the responsibility for

[17] After the deal was established, in part through bilateral discussions within a multilateral platform - the P5+1 - the US was obligated to publish a presidential review (every 90 days) that concerned the topic of compliance of the guidelines of the agreement by Iran. If the review concluded that violations of the arrangement were taking place, snap-back sanctions would be applied again with severe consequences for Iran (Fitzpatrick 2017; Strategic comments 2018; Tabatabai 2017). Under the Trump administration, these reviews became the perfect instrument to mitigate the validity of the JCPOA, and thus achieving the aspiration of isolating Iran within the international system (Cronberg 2017). According to Fitzpatrick (2017), the US approach amounted to manipulation, which took form through the adulteration of intelligence and raw data, collected by intelligence agencies, that was molded to fit the administration´s narrative in order to dissolve the agreement (Fitzpatrick 2017).

maintaining the agreement viable to the other parties that were also involved (Strategic Comments 2018).

On May 8 2018, President Trump through an official statement announced to the international community that the US would no longer support the ongoing deal and that it would act unilaterally, by reimposing crippling sanctions upon the Iranian regime (Strategic Comments 2018). Such a decision represented a huge setback for both the US as an international entity and for the NPT regime as a whole. Both negative implications are connected to the shift in roles performed by the US regarding nuclear regulation.

In sum, the role towards JCPOA, suffered a profound change in US foreign policy, since it was the target of an unrelenting attack by the Trump administration, with the sole purpose of damaging the status quo of Iran, both internally and externally (Fitzpatrick 2017). The result of such approach was the complete mitigation of all the previous diplomatic efforts including the very creation of the agreement, and a further alienation of any effort for nuclear arms control and implementation of non-proliferation policies (Cronberg 2017).

By demonstrating its willingness to "walk away" from an international agreement (not a new phenomenon for the US, as clear from the withdrawal process from the ABM Treaty) such as the JCPOA, the US under the Trump administration, officially broke from the RNP role and fully embrace the NSP role, thus starting a self-characterization distinctly individualistic and prepared to act unilaterally at any time (Trump 2018b, 2018c). The withdrawal performed by the US, deemed a leader by example and upholder of the NPT principles, also demonstrates how volatile the role enacted by a state can be, and how drastically it can change.

'Being forced to modernize' / 'Second to none'

Equally important for the NSP role and belonging also to the year of 2018 is the new "Nuclear Policy Review" (NPR), developed by the Trump executive[18]. This document is another key element in the assessment of the impact of the new role that was enacted by the US regarding nuclear weapons. In the aforementioned document, the main rhetorical standpoint defended is one of mixed nature, one that declares that the US' "commitment to the goals of the Non-Proliferation Treaty of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) remains strong" yet simultaneously advocates the urgent need to revitalize US Cold War nuclear arsenals as well as modernize its entire nuclear apparatus and infrastructure associated (Department of Defense - United States of America. Nuclear Posture Review - February 2018, II).

[18] The last NPR dates back to 2010 and was developed by the then in office Obama administration.

In other words, the responsibility of the US towards the NPT regime is apparently unchanged; however its nuclear apparatus must become "modern, flexible and resilient" (Department of Defense - United States of America. Nuclear Posture Review - February 2018, 2), demonstrating that the US will not compromise its national security even when confronted with international obligations such as the ones coded in the Non-Proliferation Treaty. However grim such a scenario can be already perceived, the fact remains that the actions of the Trump administration further increased this state of fragility of the NPT regime while promoting the newly acquired nuclear role.

The event that supports such a claim was the announcement, by the Trump executive, of its intentions to scrap one of the key bilateral agreements in nuclear affairs, the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF Treaty), from 1987. Applying the logic of a NSP actor, the President announced the intentions of his executive to eliminate this treaty based on the fact that Russia, not the US, was unwilling to dialogue and reach common ground, thus shifting the responsibility of nuclear regulation and reduction to Russia (Trump 2018d).

President Trump acting as a NSP actor also hinted that the US would have a need to develop a new set of weapons, because by abiding to the treaty while Russia violated it and proceeded to develop new weapons (specifically the 9M729 ground-launched missile), the US had fallen behind in matters of military deterrence, a subject most sensitive within the US establishment (Trump 2018d).

This fear of lagging behind is one of the backbone arguments that supports the NSP role and that is used to justify modernization efforts implemented by the US in recent times. Such behaviour can be summarized through the words of the President himself, when considering the impacts of nuclear modernization: in the mind of the Trump's administration, nuclear modernization is a must, since "we have no choice but to do it because others do it" (Trump 2018e).

This logic has since permeated the US establishment and showcases how this new role has molded the prime directives of both the national and foreign policies, placing at its center the individualistic needs above anything else.

Continuing the development of this line of thought related to the enhancement of the NSP role by the US, 2019 State of the Union address by President Trump, in comparison to the one from 2018, can be described as a tuned up version in terms of aggressive rhetoric presented. During his intervention, President Trump further engrained the notions of nuclear necessity as well as a revisionist concept of nationalism, focused on placing the US once more as the global superpower (Trump 2019a). At the same event, President Trump pursued the rhetoric, initially developed during the previous year, of abandonment of yet another nuclear agreement, this time around, the INF Treaty.

This address to the nation followed an announcement, by the Trump administration, that the US would indeed forgo the treaty, on February 1 (Trump 2019b).

The ramifications of such a political decision are several, and related to the nuclear theme, very specific. First of all, the abandonment of another international agreement by the US contributes to the entrenchment of the image of the US as being not committed to its obligations nor to its partners or allies. Secondly, the extinction of a treaty such as the INF represents a serious setback in terms of nuclear control and non-proliferation tendencies, since this treaty, at the time of implementation, lead to the disposal of entire weapon systems while concurrently boosting the relational process between former competitors (Kimball and Reif 2019). Thirdly, the weakening of the NPT regime through processes of treaty dismantling only enhances the instability of the international system and mitigates the faith that, for decades, was built around the concept of multilateralism and international cooperation. All in all, this executive decision to scrap another nuclear treaty not only damaged the international effort of nuclear weapons elimination but also promoted the new isolationist tendency advocated by the Trump administration.

With all of these consequences in mind, the role of the US as a NSP actor characterizes it perfectly, namely due to the individualistic set of actions performed and the profound contempt shown toward international commitments and collective efforts.

Connected to the issue of withdrawal of the INF Treaty is the official process of fulfilling that process, an undertaking that happened on August 2, 2019 after the Trump administration suspended its obligations under the treaty for a period of six months (Trump 2019c; Trump 2019e). By officially removing the US from this nearly three decade old treaty, the INF came to an abrupt end, leaving the way free for the US to engage in active pursuit for developing and fielding new types of nuclear weapons, as well as new delivery systems (Trump 2019).

In order to demonstrate the importance of the collapse of this treaty in particular for the NSP role of the US, the words carried out by President Trump elucidate this new tendency, and how committed the US truly is to the task of military supremacy and global hegemony, through nuclear capabilities. According to President Trump, the US "have everything new." and also "(...) have new nuclear coming" to the stage of international power. In addition, it was stated: "We make the finest equipment in the world, by far. There's nobody to compete with us" (Trump 2019e).

Finally, in the annual United Nations General Assembly address, President Trump once again brought the issue of national security to the forefront to the discussion and debate. The withdrawal from the JCPOA was correspondingly the best political move made due to the classification that the

Islamic Republic of Iran, by US security agencies, as a rogue nation and an international terrorism sponsor, which is focused on acquiring nuclear capabilities[19] (Trump 2019d; Department of Defense - United States of America. Nuclear Posture Review - February 2018, 13).

In regards to what took place in the current year of 2020 that concerns the nuclear sphere of debate, there are some events that are still of significant relevance for the context of nuclear regulation. The New START Treaty, analysed previously in this investigation, is due to expire in a couple of months, specifically in February 2021, gained even more relevance due to the collapse of the aforementioned INF Treaty, and to a certain degree, due to the debilitated status of the JCPOA agreement. In other words, the New START Treaty becomes the last major agreement struck between both nuclear superpowers of the international system and that still keeps at bay any attempt for the acquisition of new types of weaponry or delivery systems (Albright and Ivanov 2020). However, as the clock was ticking, no significant milestone was achieved concerning the extension and preservation of this last major regulatory agreement in 2020. And thus, we reach the first event that came to be during 2020 and that has implications to the NPT regime and all peaceful nuclear efforts (Ruptly "Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Ryabkov speaks to press on arms control").

The so-called "Vienna Talks" were held during the 22nd and spawned until the 24th of June, and represented the most recent efforts to initiate proper dialogue with the goal of reaching an understanding on the extension of the New START Treaty[20]. The urgency of this meeting is correlated to the nearing of the official ending date of the treaty. Despite the sense of urgency the broad understanding that comes from analysing the talks is that the US spent much of the time stalling and demanding specific conditions, for its individual benefit (Reif and Bugos 2020a, 2020b). Thus, once more, US role falls into the category of NSP behaviour, this time aggravated by the expiration of the last major nuclear agreement and continuously underpinned by the manifestation of national interests in detriment of the collective good.

Another event that also took place during 2020, and that strengthened the NSP role was the UNGA address, by then President Donald Trump on September 22. President Trump's statement was related to self-conceived perceptions of American power and influence within the international system.

[19] Within this perception of Iran is also the notion that this entity was not being duly regulated by the JCPOA, since in the eyes of President Trump, the JCPOA was the "worst deal of the century", too weak to keep at bay the military aspirations of the Iranian republic (Trump 2018c). By stating this personal perception about one of the most comprehensive and significant international efforts, to this day, to ever be implemented at the highest level of representation - United Nations General Assembly address - the Trump administration just keeps revealing where its true goals lie, in respect to nuclear regulatory efforts, as mentioned already previously.

[20] Further rounds of negotiations took place in October of 2020. However, the outcome was the same stonewalling that took place during the first round, of June.

During his address, President Trump made reference to the "American strength", through which a direct reference to US military dominance was made, especially in the nuclear field (Trump 2020).

Also introduced in this speech was the equally important notion of withdrawal, a concept that is as crucial for the US establishment as the necessity of having a robust nuclear triad. Associated with these notions is the old concept of "American exceptionalism", although this time in the form of destiny.

In his address, President Trump allured toward the notion that the US has to fulfill its destiny "as a peacemaker, but peace through strength", revealing clearly the new ideology endorsed by the US establishment (Trump 2020).

Nonetheless, the most interesting aspect that one can withhold from the analysis of this document is the total absence of any reference to the New START Treaty and soon to be extinct status nor to the previously stated "Vienna Talks".

Classifying US position under the Trump's administration according to the proposed set of roles

The lack of any sort of reference to nuclear regulation by the president of one of the nuclear superpowers is a daunting scenario. A scenario that further elucidates the deep transformation that happened in just four years to the US international stance regarding nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament processes, shifting from a RNP role to the current NSP one. The NSP role enacted by the Trump administration entails the understanding on how international relations should be conducted, namely by relinquishing to second or even third place notions such as cooperation and stability in favor of modernization and arms race competition. It seems that the old rhetoric of the Cold War, based on the logic of nuclear deterrence, came back to life. Through the enactment of a NSP role, the US aims at fulfilling its individual interests while simultaneously conveying the perception that the US is still one of the key entities for the Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Arms Control regime.

The years 2019 and 2020 were especially important in cementing US nuclear role as an predominantly NSP actor, solely focused in acquiring the cutting edge technology and knowledge in order to reign absolute within the international system (Wolffe 2020) and to, once more, dictate the international policies and normative trends. And such enactment and pursuit of provocative policies, underpinning the projection of the NSP role, did not bode well for the global effort of the 1968 Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons venues of regulation.

By advocating such rhetoric, the US created a narrative, very similar to the ones that characterized the early stages of the Cold War, where the possibility of nuclear annihilation was

deemed a functional and acceptable price as far as the US establishment was regarded. The fact that such a mentality, even if not at its fullest, was back and expressed at the highest level of government revealed a radical turn with serious implications for international nuclear norms. The end result of such a role was the obvious mitigation of the nuclear eradication goal, coupled with the drastic change in positioning that the US holds. The US no longer had the international influence and stance that once possessed, even if the national rhetoric tries to claim otherwise.

The reality of the situation is that with such a new nuclear role the US successfully achieved a fundamental change. If one of the nuclear superpowers is willing to jeopardize the entire international community by keeping its nuclear weapons and even promoting and financing modernization programs of those same weapons and systems, the general behaviour of the international community will be one of being less prone to abide to the international nuclear regime and more driven to achieve national goals, one of them being acquiring nuclear weapons.

Table 3 – US nuclear role and the associated categories

Role codes	RNP	NSP
Definition	Emphasis on the international commitment; Nuclear reduction is a concern; The international regimes, such as the NPT one are as important as nuclear strategy/arsenals; Collective good is above individual goals.	Nuclear superiority is regarded as pivotal, even mitigating international arrangements such as the NPT; Prioritization the "Self" is a defining trait; Maintenance of the state's security is essential
Description	**'Unique Responsibility'** • *'moral obligation'* (stability, 'striving towards peace', 'leading by example', global security, nuclear disarmament, create "a world without them") • proactivity and positive engagement towards the NPT regime • strengthening non-proliferation nuclear tendencies • transparency • *'global zero'* ('nuclear-weapon-free-world', create "a world without them", nuclear disarmament, nuclear reduction, global security) • deterrence is not a constant (it is not an absolut, bound to the concept of fatalism)	**Modernization** • *'America first'/'unmatched power'* (sentiment of exceptionalism, disdain for international agreements, redefinition of the rules of engagement, mitigation of diplomatic efforts, military dominance, manipulation of context, reacquisition of status and influence) • normative disrupter; o withdrawal as a viable course of action • *'being forced to modernize'/ 'second to none'* (politicization of nuclear commitments, weight of the circumstances, 'forced to act/modernize', fear of lagging behind, nuclear modernization)

Source: summary of the author

The current thesis has established the goal of assessing the policies of two individual nuclear states towards Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Arms Control regime. We focus on the nuclear powers that have been shaping the nuclear debate, namely the US and Russia, since the fate of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Arms Control regime is intertwined with the evolution of their nuclear policies. The research question of the present thesis has been formulated as follows: **"How have the role dynamics underpinning Russia's and US' standing as nuclear powers been informing their policies towards Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Arms Control Regime?"**

In order to answer the research question, an analytical framework has been developed. Thus, the first chapter was dedicated to the chosen theoretical framework, namely the Role Theory. Following its conceptual origins and evolutionary course over time, and the associated epistemological evolution, Role Theory was located in a broader family of Constructivism. By analyzing the interaction between Constructivism and Role Theory, the first chapter emphasized the importance of the scope of each of these theoretical perspectives: of the Constructivism as a meta-theory on the one hand, and of the Role Theory, which operates at a different theoretical range, and therefore with different methodological and empirical implications, on the other hand. Finally, this chapter delves into the main concepts constituting Role Theory while also investigating the important connections and relations among them. The final section of this first chapter develops the Hypothesis, by drawing on ideal-types which inform the creation of a specific set of roles (RNP and NSP) as a basis for the analysis of the individual case studies (Russia and the US).

The second chapter has analyzed the NPT regime as a centerpiece of the nuclear non-proliferation and arms control, including some of its key historical points, as well as its main constitutive elements, namely the pillars that support the entire NPT range of action. Drawing on specific examples of NPT's performance, the second chapter has demonstrated that the NPT, despite structural flaws and impending problems, still retains an undeniable importance for the international order, since it is the best mechanism in play to tackle the growing tendencies against the nuclear proliferation and development of nuclear weapons.

The third chapter has been dedicated to the analysis of Russia. First, the chapter presented recent historical precedents of Russia's nuclear performance, emphasizing the period of the 1990s. The analysis formulated reflects Russia's role dynamics, in terms of ego versus role positioning towards the Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Arms Control regime. The result is the establishment of extremes in Russia's role enactment with the respective implications for the international nuclear policy. Interestingly, Russia's engagement with the ABM Treaty (2001-2002) can be said to correspond to

Russia's ascribed role. Nonetheless, the acceptance of this role on the part of Russia, as one of the key nuclear players, had been working toward strengthening the Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Arms Control regime. In the other instance of the analysis, namely the Budapest Memorandum (from 1994), the chapter demonstrated another face of Russia's role performance (now in its ego dimension), stemming from Russia's violation of its obligations under the established agreement and actions that generated consequences for both the integrity of the International Law and for the Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Arms Control regime. As analyzed in the respective section, Russia acted as an ego state within the realm of nuclear regulation, putting its self-interest above the international commitments and global stability.

The chapter then identified categories that have characterized Russia's nuclear role, namely 'technological exceptionalism' and 'special responsibility'. The following thematic analysis was aimed at ascertaining how the dynamics of the two roles - RNP and NSP - have been informing Russia's nuclear policy.

The results of the case of Russia correspond to the simultaneous display of both roles (sometimes in the same intervention, conference or statement). This allows us to infer that both roles are interconnected, rather than exclusive: an actor with an enacted RNP can well display a clear NSP positioning, and vice-versa. Indeed, this conclusion is in line with the RNP and NSP as ideal types: it is impossible for an actor to be a pure RNP or a pure NSP actor, due to the fact that expectations and goals of a state are influenced by its social and environmental circumstances, which translates into a modification of the respective role (this conclusion is not exclusive to Russia, as will be demonstrated below).

Furthermore, in the time frame selected for the thematic analysis (2015-2020), chapter three has allowed to establish the oscillation in the Russian role performance as its most dominant trait. Contrary to the US, Russia's policies towards the Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Arms Control regime are afflicted by a consistent inconsistency. The apparent paradox may be related to the conflicting nature of Russia's own identity (Zevelev 2016, 8) in more general terms: ineptitude to define oneself, in a clear fashion, something that also translates into the nuclear policy field, and that creates a difficulty of clear-cut role assessment when analyzing Russia's nuclear record.

In regards to the first category - '**technological exceptionalism**' - Russia has been able to enact both of the roles constructed (RNP and NSP) (See Table 4). However, taking into account the analysis of Russia's nuclear policy and its classification according to the categories developed in the present dissertation, Russia tends to feature as a NSP actor, aiming at changing the status quo in its favour, by

making use of any available instrument (something that it is reflected in the efforts in the realm of technological innovation and nuclear modernization). This is despite of Russia presenting particular episodes of international commitment and concern towards international security and stability (through the advocacy of the need for strategic stability and urgent necessity to maintain the nuclear agreements viable, and even by fostering debate and cooperation). As for the opposite role, RNP, more often than not, acts as a 'diluter' for some of Russia's more aggressive rhetoric and actions.

Concerning the other category identified in the Russian case - '**special responsibility**' - the chapter also allows for the assessment of Russia's role and the associated positive dynamics in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Arms Control regime. We demonstrate how a revised nuclear image is created by Russia, with an inclination towards the collective good and international stability, which aims at mitigating its (another important) role projection of aggressiveness and individualistic posture. While this category is essential to Russia's RNP role, especially when projecting the latter by placing constant emphasis on questioning of the US performance, the RNP role is eventually undermined by Russia's inconsistent nuclear policy, exemplified by its own modernization programs that have been developed over the last couple of decades.

Russia's nuclear roles, after the analytical process and use of the created categories, allow this thesis to determine the presence of patterns concerning those very same roles: Russia has a tendency for shifting between roles - RNP and NSP - in a rather extreme fashion. It is here that this investigation, to highlight the depth of role oscillation that Russia is capable of enacting, makes use of the metaphorical case of the characters from Robert Louis Stevenson's novel (1886), Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. Russia is simultaneously both of these characters, in this dissertation being a "Dr. Jekyll" is referent to the RNP role, while being a "Mr. Hyde" implies performing a NSP role. The year of 2018 is a perfect example that demonstrates this severe oscillation between roles that Russia can enact.

Chapter four has dealt with the case of the US. The initial sections establish the range of role variation, by looking into the US' contribution to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Arms Control regime following the end of the Cold War. We identified one instance of nuclear behaviour that is aimed at strengthening the Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Arms Control regime (role state), while another instance demonstrating that the US does not abstain from the course that may result in the weakening of the regime (ego state). Accordingly, the chapter first analysed the Presidential Nuclear Initiatives (1991-1992) and the JCPOA (2015), which had allowed the US to construct an image amongst its peers, and in particular amongst the nuclear states, of an actor assuming responsibility, while also steering the international community towards the global objective of nuclear weapons'

eradication. Subsequently, the chapter investigated the US position towards the ABM Treaty, an instance in which the US - contrary to Russia – had acted as an ego state (by placing emphasis on the national interests to the detriment of the maintenance of international stability and nuclear regulation), a position holding the potential to compromise the Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Arms Control regime.

Following the same analytical approach as in the previous case study, we identified specific categories, 'unique responsibility' and 'modernization', which served as the basis for the classification of the US, under the administration of Trump corresponding to the NSP role and the administration of Obama corresponding to the RNP role. Accordingly, in the period under analysis (2015-2020), the US mainly came to act as an RNP state, upholding the long-lasting international expectations for nuclear weapons eradication, leading by example and through strong advocacy of disarmament and elimination processes for nuclear arsenals. By projecting such a role, the US managed to position and established itself as an actor capable of influencing the normative perception of the international community. The US demonstrated that, despite being one of the nuclear superpowers, it was willing to eliminate its nuclear deterrence capabilities in favour of international stability and peace. In other words, through the RNP role, the US became the instigator of a set of new norms and tendencies, that effectively shifted the nuclear paradigm, moving away from the mentality of nuclear competition - which permeated the entire period of the Cold War era - to a status of intense cooperation and focus on achieving real progress in matter of nuclear and arms reductions. Through this role, which is reflected in the 'unique responsibility' category, a new behaviour was developed and followed by members of the international community, which had paved the way to altering of the international reality, aiming for a more peaceful and cooperative one instead of one based on intense military competition, fear and hostility.

Table 4 - Russia's and US' roles, the associated categories and sub-categories

Role codes	RNP	NSP
Definition	Emphasis on the international commitment; Nuclear reduction is a concern; The international regimes, such as the NPT one are as important as nuclear strategy/arsenals; Collective good is above individual goals.	Nuclear superiority is regarded as pivotal, even mitigating international arrangements such as the NPT; Prioritization the "Self" is a defining trait; Maintenance of the state's security is essential
Russia	**Russia's 'special responsibility'** ● *'open for' dialogue'* (nuclear initiatives, peaceful cooperation, transparency, policy maker) ● *'defender of the international regime'* (shared responsibility, 'strategic parity') 'treaties must be kept alive', global peace and security, 'nuclear-weapon-free-world' ● *'concerned nuclear power'* ('nuclear concern' 'treaties must be kept alive', 'strategic parity') ● '*critical of US'* (nuclear concern, 'nuclear treaties must be kept alive', collective/multilateral efforts are a crucial element, shared responsibility - pointing at the US)	Technological Exceptionalism ● *'not a bluff'* (nuclear strength, nuclear modernization, cutting edge and larger number of weapons, technological innovation) ● '*strategic parity'* (survival of the state, sovereignty, technological innovation, power, redefinition of the rules of engagement, nuclear modernization) ● '*soviet legacy'* ('not catching up with anyone', exceptionalism, power, nuclear strength as centrality after the collapse of the USSR)
US	'Unique Responsibility' ● *moral obligation'* (stability, 'striving towards peace', 'leading by example', global security, nuclear disarmament, create "a world without them") ● proactivity and positive engagement towards the NPT regime ● strengthening non-proliferation nuclear tendencies ● transparency ● *'global zero'* ('nuclear-weapon-free-world', create "a world without them", nuclear disarmament, nuclear reduction, global security) ● deterrence is not a constant (it is not an absolute, bound to the concept of fatalism)	Modernization ● *'America first'/'unmatched power'* (sentiment of exceptionalism, disdain for international agreements, redefinition of the rules of engagement, mitigation of diplomatic efforts, military dominance, manipulation of context, reacquisition of status and influence) ● normative disrupter; ○ withdrawal as a viable course of action ● *'being forced to modernize'/ 'second to none'* (politicization of nuclear commitments, weight of the circumstances, 'forced to act/modernize', fear of lagging behind, nuclear modernization)

Source: summary of the author

However, the US also proved capable of enacting the NSP role, at the end of the period under the analysis, a role that stands in opposition to the RNP role. Through the RNP role, the US advocated advancement and entrenchment of nuclear and arms regulation, achieved through example and support of multilateral initiatives, the US, under the banner of an NSP actor, produces a damaging effect on the nuclear cause. Through the NSP role, the US ultimately antagonized the very same audience that used to support the US as a RNP promoting the goal of the eradication of these weapons. By the end of 2020, the US firmly established itself as an isolationist actor, with both national and foreign policies upholding nuclear weapons as a critically necessary tool to counter the international tendencies and behaviour of certain international actors, such as China or Russia. This conclusion is confirmed by the analysis of the 'modernization' category – something that allows for the demonstration of how fluid a role performance may become, over time.

Thus, as mentioned above, it is possible to conclude that the role performance of both Russia and US was neither static nor monolithic, and it might appear to some extent surprising that neither Russia nor US have displayed a more uniform role. However, it is important to note that the dynamics of role projection differ in the cases of Russia and US significantly. Unlike Russia, marked by a constant oscillation between extremes in terms of role performance which takes place against the background of a static political landscape, the dynamics of US' role performance is closely intertwined with the change in administrations.

This allows us to draw an important conclusion on the concept of 'role conflict'. In the Russian case, the role conflict can be synthesized via the Jekyll and Hyde analogy: two roles 'living' within the same 'body' in the very stevensonian sense generating two contradicting kinds of behavior at the same time. Russia therefore possesses a more convoluted, ambiguous nature of its role. In the case of the US, in spite of the presence of the two roles in the time period under the analysis, no explicit role conflict exists. In the process of change of administrations, one of the roles ceases to exist, and its place is taken by another: the RNP role is, after a period of adjustment, replaced by the NSP role, its 'mirrored opposite': Jekyll (or Hyde) have to die, or to fall into a coma and this is the only possibility for the opposite figure to take control over the 'body'.

To be sure, enactment of (NSP/RNP) roles on the part of Russia and US could not but generate significant consequences for the integrity of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Arms Control regime. With (one of the) nuclear superpower(s) willing to jeopardize the stability of the entire international community by not only keeping its nuclear weapons but also promoting and financing (new) modernization programs, the remainder of the nuclear weapon states will be inevitably less prone

to abide by the Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Arms Control regime. With the aggressive role performance of the NSP, the regime faces some of its most acrimonious moments, which translates into the chronic lack of confidence towards this regime by the international community. This new environment has the potential to foster a rampant increase in nuclear arms investment as well as witnessing the growth in the number of nuclear weapon states.

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United States' role enactment table

Years	State of the Union Addresses	UNGA statements	Munich Security Conferences	Additional Documentation
2015	President Obama´s address (January 15th, 2015) Classification: **N**	President Obama as representative (September 28th, 2015) Classification: **S** (**RNP**)	Classification: **O**	* The Nobel Peace Prize for **2009** - Barack H. Obama Classification: **S (RNP)** (for obvious reasons)
2016	President Obama´s address (January 12th, 2016) Classification: **N**	President Obama as representative (September 20th, 2016) Classification: **S (RNP)**	Classification: **O**	"How Can Make Our Vision of a World without Nuclear Weapons a reality" (Barack Obama March 30th, 2016; Article from the Washington Post) Classification: **S (RNP)** "Text of President Obama´s Speech in Hiroshima, Japan" (Barack Obama, 27th May, 2016 - New York Times) Classification: **S (RNP)**
2017	President Trump's first state of the Union (February 28th) Classification: **O (the theme was completely absent from record)**	President Trump as representative (September 19th, 2017) Classification: **S (NSP)**	Classification: **S (NSP)**	Munich Security Conference 2017 Classification: **S (NSP)** Presidential Memorandum on Rebuilding the US Armed Forces (January 27th) Classification: **S (NSP)** "President Trump Announces a National Security Strategy to Advance America´s Interests" (December 18th) Classification: **S (NSP)** National Security Strategy document (December 2017) Classification: **S (NSP)** "Remarks by the Vice President on Nuclear Security", January 11, 2017 - Vice-President Biden's remarks. Classification: **S (RNP)**
2018	President Trump's address (January 30th, 2018)	President Trump as representative (September 25th, 2018)	Classification: **S (RNP)**	Munich Security Conference 2018 Classification: **S (NSP)**

	Classification: **S (NSP)**	Classification: **S (NSP)**		"Statement by President Trump on the NPR" (February 2nd) Classification: **S (NSP)** Remarks by President Trump before Air Force One Departure (October 20th) Classification: **S (NSP)** Nuclear Posture Review document (February 2018) Classification: **S (NSP)** **"**Ceasing U.S. Participation in the JCPOA and Taking Additional Action to Counter Iran's Malign Influence and Deny Iran All Efforts to a Nuclear Weapon", May 8, 2018. "Remarks by President Trump on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action", May 8, 2018. Classification (both): **S (NSP)**
2019	President Trump's address (February 5th, 2019) Classification: **S (NSP)**	President Trump as representative (September 29th, 2019) Classification: **S (NSP)**	Classification: **S (NSP)**	Munich Security Conference 2019 Classification: **S (NSP)** Statement by President Trump before Marine One Departure (August 2nd) Classification: **S (NSP)**
2020	President Trump's address (February 4th, 2020) Classification: **S (NSP)**	President Trump as representative (September 22nd, 2020) Classification: **S (NSP)**	Classification: **S (NSP)**	

Russia's enactment table

Years	Federal Assembly Addresses	UNGA statements	Munich Security Conferences statements	Additional Documentation
2015	President Putin's address (December 3rd, 2015) Classification: **O**	President Putin as representative (September 28th) Classification: **N**	Classification: **O/I**	* **2014 Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation** → a national security document that demonstrates the new policy tendencies of the russian establishment: **S (NSP tendency)**
2016	President Putin's	Minister for Foreign Affairs	Classification: **S (the**	

	address (December 1st, 2016) Classification: **S (RNP role)**	of the Russian Federation, Sergei Lavrov as representative (September 23rd, 2016) Classification: **S (RNP role)**	**statements of Medvedev and Lavrov support this classification, one that is towards RNP)**	
2017	Document non-existent (this address did not took place during this year)	Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Sergei Lavrov as representative (September 21st, 2017) Classification: **S (RNP role)**	Classification: **S (RNP role)**	Classification: **S (RNP)** "Vladimir Putin's interview with Le Figaro (May 31st)
2018	President Putin's address (March 1st, 2018) Classification: **S (NSP role)**	Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Sergei Lavrov as representative (September 28th, 2018) Classification: **S (NSP role)**	Classification: **S (NSP role)**	Classification: **S (RNP role)** "News Conference following talks between the presidents of Russia and the United States" (July 16th) Classification: **S (NSP role)** "Defence Ministry Board meeting" (December 18th, 2018) Classification: **S (RNP role)** "Vladimir Putin's annual news conference" (December 20th, 2018)
2019	President Putin's address (February 20th, 2019) Classification: **S (RNP role)**	Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Sergei Lavrov as representative (September 27th, 2019) Classification: **S (RNP role)**	Classification: **S (NSP role)**	
2020	President Putin's address (January 15th, 2020) Classification: **S (RNP role)**	President Putin as representative (September 22nd, 2020) Classification: **S (RNP role)**	Classification: **N**	Vienna Talks